

Rain Man and Dead Ringers among best of '88

By HOWARD KAMAN

1988 may be remembered as the year of "brother" films.

There was *Rain Man*, the film that took forever to make but became a tour-de-force showcase of Dustin Hoffman's phenomenal talent. The story of Charlie Babbitt and his forgotten brother, an autistic savant named Raymond, will surely grab an Oscar for best actor. Also memorable was *Dead Ringers*, the most intelligent and disturbing film yet to come from director David Cronenberg. Jeremy Irons in the lead role as a pair of twin gynaecologists was riveting to watch, and should give Hoffman a run for his money.

Portrayal of twins also gave us one of the year's most forgettable films. While fun to watch for a while (it includes Arnold Schwarzenegger's first speaking part), *Twins* is only an opportunity for its stars to play the characters they always do. Seeing Danny DeVito play a crook and Schwarzenegger play a nice guy is nothing much, especially when neither of them call really act.

Also notable is this year's glitziest film, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* Although it was a technically brilliant return to the charm of old Disney classics, it was too much of a technological showcase to hit the mark. There wasn't enough breathing room between the "Ooohs" and "Ahhhs" to throw in the good old-fashioned Disney magic. Rather than developing cartoons with the subtle details of Disney, the director of this film settled instead for gross exaggeration and cuteness.

Apply this same cuteness to Tom Cruise and we may account for the incredible success of *Cocktail*. This film was miserable due not to Cruise, but to a derivative script. Cruise's performance in this film is sad, especially in comparison to his wonderful portrayal of Charlie Babbitt in *Rain Man*. I suppose the acting is only as good as the role.

One of this year's most demanding roles, that of Jesus, was ably portrayed by Willem Dafoe in what was



Rain Man's Dustin Hoffman: (right) is a sure bet to win the Best Actor Oscar for 1988.

easily one of the year's most-hyped films, *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Director Martin Scorsese caused a storm of controversy over the presentation of Christ as an ordinary human being. Protests and picketing helped promote this generally boring film, which probably would have failed without it.

Another over-hyped film featured an incarnation of God; Bono at least in his own mind, seemed to think he had all the answers in *U2: Rattle and Hum*. Touted as the band's "image of two Americas," the film is really nothing more than a two-hour rock video. If the message is in the music, you would have been better off buy-

ing the album and avoiding the movie.

Finally, two of the year's finest films featured vibrant portrayals of highly individual personalities. *Bird*, directed by Clint Eastwood, was an exquisite tribute to jazz great Charlie Parker. Eastwood's love for jazz was evident as the film effectively portrayed a man who lived for his art. Parker (Forest Whitaker) was a man obsessed — not only with music, but with drugs and alcohol as well. As a result of his addiction, he died a victim to drugs — but a legend in music.

Another loving tribute — this time to the man who invented a revolutionary, but nearly forgotten vehicle — was *Tucker*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola. It is also more than that; it was also the story of man in love with a dream. Like Whitaker in *Bird*, Jeff Bridges portrayed Tucker as a man consumed by a vision, unable to ignore his dream of a better car, the Tucker Torpedo. Also as in *Bird*, our character loses in the

end, with his company going under. Both Bird and Tucker revolutionized their fields at the expense of their own long-term success.

This theme of quality seems to dominate 1988's best films. From *Rain Man*, where Raymond ends up in an institution after weeks on the road with his brother, to Tucker, whose business goes under, but changes the auto industry forever, this year's crop of films seems to say that the quality of success is more important than the quantity.

So we know what was good and bad in 1988. What will be big in '89? Like every other year in recent memory, 1989 will be a year filled with sequels. Look for *Star Trek V*, *Police Academy VI*, *Beverly Hills Cop III*, *The Fly II*, *Back To The Future II*, *Ghostbusters II*, *Karate Kid III*, *Lethal Weapon II*, *Indiana Jones III*, and *The Gods Must Be Crazy II*, and, dare we expect, egads, *Friday the 13th Part VIII*???

Time, and a new year, will tell.

McCulloch's new show displays talent

By LEO MACDONALD

Jazz Stenographers
Directed by Andy Mckim
Tarragon's Extra Space

Jazz Stenographers is a one-man comedy routine featuring Bruce McCulloch's reflections on love, pets, death, tuxedos and having to decide between wanting world peace and wanting a Jeep.

McCulloch, a member of THE Kids in the Hall — a Toronto-based comedy troupe — uses the same brand of black Monty-Pthonesque humour that has won THE Kids critical acclaim.

"The Jazz Stenographer" is just one skit amongst a blitz of situations that are turned upside-down and inside-out by McCulloch's comic imagination.

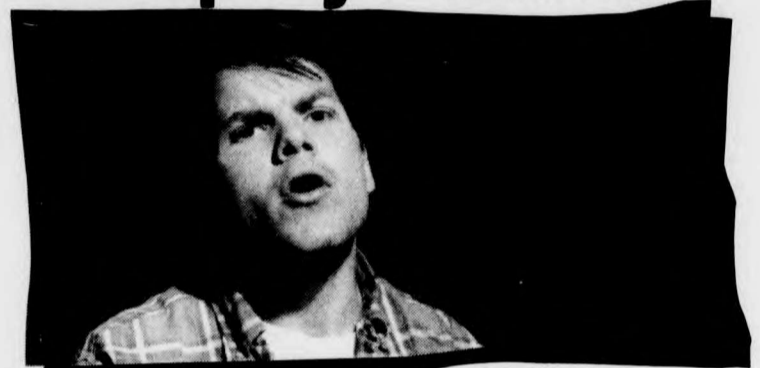
Connie, we are told, is a stenographer who graduated in 1963 from

a Syracuse business school with the distinction of possessing good posture, a beehive hair-do, and high bowling average.

To see Connie, the Jazz Stenographer, at work dictating Ella Fitzgerald's oh-bop-she-bam skat syllables is only to begin experiencing the unique style of McCulloch and THE Kids in the Hall.

The stage set during the performance simply consists of an arm chair and a coffee mug. Throughout the 70 minute show, McCulloch spends his time moving around the stage, engaging the audience with his gestures and nervous energy.

Dressed casually in baggy jeans, cowboy boots and a loose-hanging shirt, McCulloch even makes jokes about his own appearance. Several years ago, he admits to the audience, "I used to be a punk rocker,



Jazz Stenographers: a unique series of skits from Kid in The Hall Bruce McCulloch.

although you couldn't tell by looking at me, but if you asked me I'd tell you." He says that to be a punk rocker, in Calgary (his home town), all you had to do was either sleep in late or wear a pink t-shirt.

Other performances to his credit include a solo piece called *Trapped in*

a Lawn Chair which played at the 1986 Edmonton Fringe Festival. As a member of THE Kids in the Hall, he was also part of a special that aired on CBC in early December.

The Jazz Stenographer will be playing until January 15 at the Tarragon Extra Space.

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