

Director's clout evident in Amazon production

By N.L. WILNER

Amazon Women on the Moon John Landis

In the early '70s, a handful of young film-makers made a movie comprised of about 15 brief sketches, and called it *The Kentucky Fried Movie* (after the Kentucky Fried Theatre, something like a Middle American *Second City*). Those kids would soon grow up, and one of them—John Landis—would go on to make a number of successful pictures: *Animal House*, *An American Werewolf In London*, and *Into The Night*, to name but a few. The others were Jim Abrahams, and the Zucker brothers, Jerry and David; who

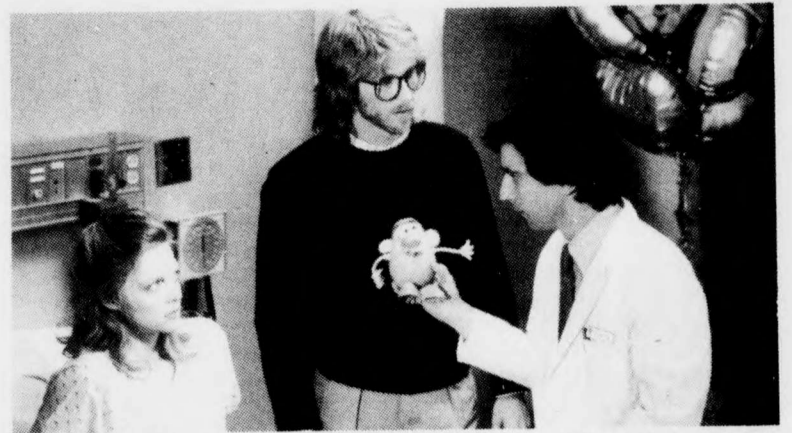
would eventually make *Airplane*, *Top Secret*, and last year's *Ruthless People*. *Kentucky Fried Movie* came and went, but director Landis never forgot it, or his intentions of making another film like it someday.

It's 1987, and Landis has finally realized his dream, with no less than four other directors (Joe Dante, Robert Weiss, Peter Horton and Carl Gottlieb) and a total of twenty self-contained bits. Abrahams and the Zucker brothers are nowhere to be seen, and the title has been changed to *Amazon Women On The Moon*, but they will not be missed. This film stands on its own.

Landis' clout (as executive producer and co-director) is evident. *Kentucky Fried Movie* was almost exclusively performed by unknown

actors, while *Amazon Women* is packed with star talent. And the higher budget is all on screen too: a sequence with veteran character actor Henry Silva called "Bullshit Or Not?" speculates on the connection between Jack the Ripper and the Loch Ness Monster. The world's worst comedian, Arsenio Hall, is attacked and eventually killed by his condominium in a wonderfully executed opening sequence.

Joe Dante gives us a bizarre funeral in which the deceased is roasted by Henny Youngman, Slappy White, Steve Allen and other veteran comedians. Dante regular Robert Picardo (*Innerspace's* cowboy) appears (as a mortician), as does frequent cohort Belinda Belaski (as the bereaved widow).



IT'S A BOY! The proud parents (Michelle Pfeiffer and Peter Horton) are congratulated by the doctor (Griffin Dunne) in *Amazon Women*.

In a different sequence, directed by Carl Gottlieb (who wrote the screenplays for *Jaws* and *Jaws 2*), Peter Horton and Michelle Pfeiffer play parents who are stalled by their doctor (Griffin Dunne of *After*

Hours) while his staff searches for their missing baby. Robert K. Weiss (who also produced this film) directs Steve Guttenberg and Rosanna Arquette in a bit about blind dating.

And two pieces tie it all together: a 1950 something (the announcer can't quite keep the date straight) sci-fi thriller *Amazon Women On The Moon*, full of splices and edited for television is shown to us via Channel 8, the same station that Landis created for *The Kentucky Fried Movie* all those years ago, and a series of pieces about a soulless black singer (he covers "Tie A Yellow Ribbon," and "Blame It On The Bossa Nova," for starters) run through the breadth of the film. Landis directed both segments. Other pieces, like "Son Of The Invisible Man," with Ed Begley Jr. as a slightly deluded scientist, and "Restless Youth," a 1940s VD film with Paul Bartel and Carrie Fisher (both directed by Joe Dante) are amusing, and keep the picture moving along at a good clip.

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