

# Woody Allen gets into fairytales, with lots of sex

by Ward McBurney

Strike one up for magic and metaphysics. Woody Allen's latest film, "A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy", may have more in common with a fairytale than with his previous works, but still holds its own charm. Rather than leave humanity helplessly alone with its frustrations (sexual or otherwise) Allen chooses to bring in Spirit Boxes and woodland ghosties to give some hope to his viewers.

The entire film is ridden with nostalgia. Instead of present-day Manhattan, Allen and his five fellow weekenders retreat for a country weekend in 1910ish farm-house paradise, with fauns, yellow-bellied sapsuckers and lots of Mendelson playing in the background. The figure Allen cuts for himself is also nostalgic: a slightly balding financier whose passion lies in good 'ol American ingenuity (he's a "crackpot inventor" who succeeds in flying in and out of several scenes in an impossible device). Mary Steenburgen, who plays his wife, is so expressive and sensitive she rivals Allen's own subtle facial expressions, and the two make a nice, confused, shy and rural American couple (without gothic pitchforks).

As for sex, there's plenty, though more said than done. Tony Roberts

is the ever present man of opportunity who seizes the moment and about everything else he can. This includes Mia Farrow, who is a kind of untouchable angelic nymphette intending to wed a corpse-like philosopher (Jose Ferrer) and finish her days with academic chit-chats and chess games. (Philosophy students beware.)

In fact, Ferrer, Roberts and Allen comprise a curious triangle. The philosopher wants to live a secure future, resting on his laurels and Mia Farrow, while Roberts is always "a man of the moment". This leaves Allen obsessed with the past and the passage of time. Through this character one understands why "A Midsummer Nights Sex Comedy" is such a light-hearted, pleasant film. Woody Allen is growing older and, like most persons, is alarmed at the prospect. So he conjures up a little magic to make it easier, and allows love and sex to triumph together.

All in all, the film is a very worthwhile thing to see, the only drawback being the location. It's playing in the Penhorn Cinema in Dartmouth, which is in one of the ugliest malls ever built. Hopefully Allen's latest effort will make it across the water soon, or perhaps the Penhorn will burn down.

Of course I'm an artist.  
You think it's easy to be  
neurotic and wear white  
at the same time?

Aw, Woody (sigh.)

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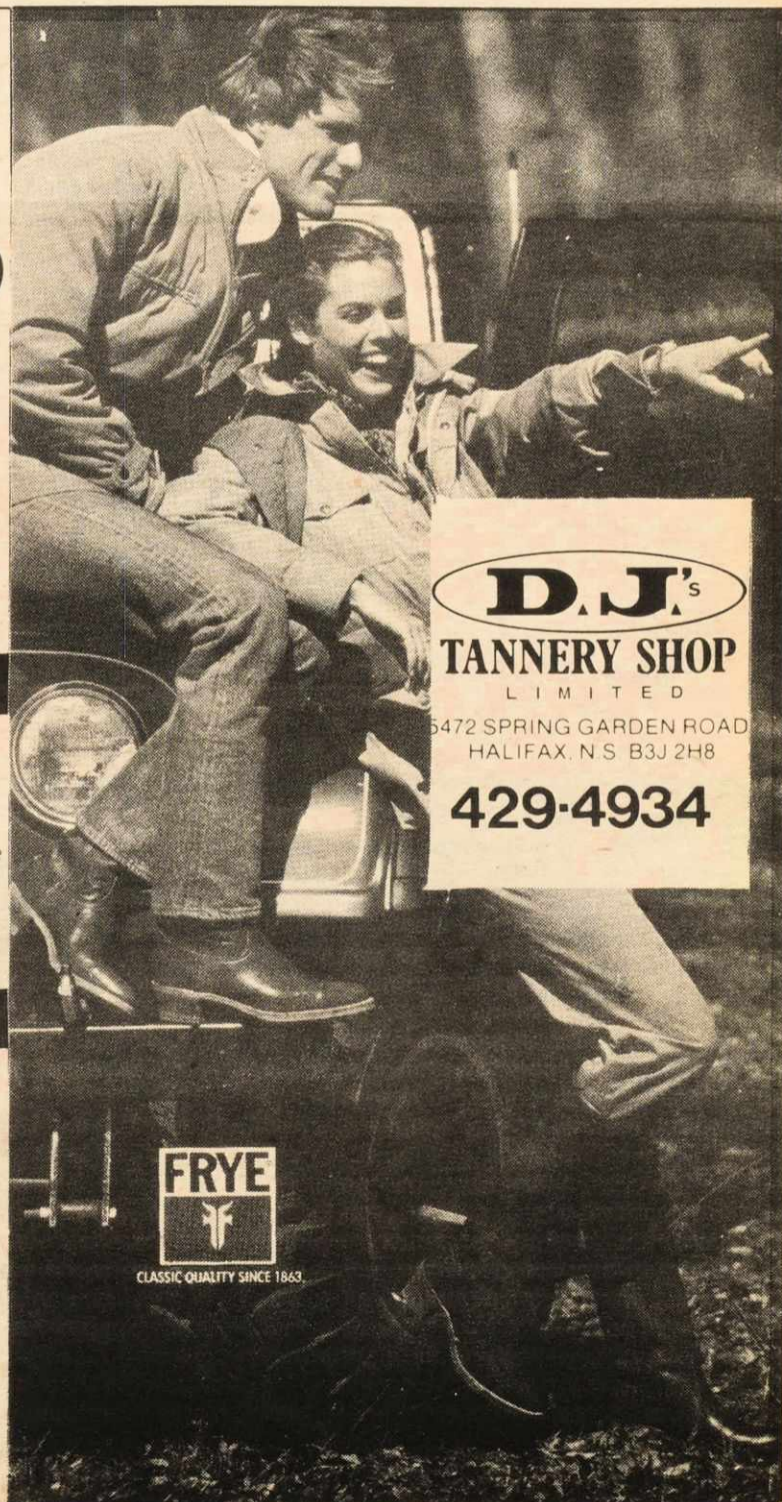
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