

# Don't tell me it's another Guttenberg pic

by Mark Dillon

*Don't Tell Her It's Me* directed by Malcolm Mowbray produced by Hemdale Film Corporation

The most interesting thing about *Don't Tell Her It's Me*, a new romantic comedy directed by Malcolm Mowbray, is its cast.

The film is about cartoonist Gus Kubicek (Steve Guttenberg), who has recently recovered from a radiation-related disease that has left him bald and shy around women. Shelley Long plays his sister, a busy-body who writes cheap romance novels under the name "Viveca Lamoureux."

Long tries to set Guttenberg up with Emily, a beautiful journalist played by Jamie Gertz (*Less Than Zero* and *The Lost Boys*). Unfortunately, Emily has the hots for Trout, her sleazy boss played by Kyle MacLachlan (of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks*).

According to the press release, the makers of *Don't Tell Her It's Me* were aiming for something "in the tradition of some of our most popular, classic comedies." What they have is something not far from the low comedy of the *Police Academy* films that made Guttenberg a star.

Imagine screenwriter Sarah Bird and director Mowbray thinking we would find funny such moments as Viveca's infant daughter sticking her tongue in a

wall socket (off camera), or putting an oil-covered bolt in her mouth, or biting a cockroach in two (on camera). Oh, yeah: there's also a mysterious Japanese salad that moves.

Don't blame Steve Guttenberg for how the film came out. He actually gives a pretty good account of himself in his continual search to lose that *Police Academy* stigma. For my money, Guttenberg came closest with the 1987 Hitchcock-like thriller *The Bedroom Window*.

The role of Gus was not an undemanding one. Guttenberg must go through the first half of the movie hairless, fat and sluggish; then, when his hair has grown back, he is transformed into a tough, leather-clad biker who speaks with an Australian accent. That is how Viveca convinces him Emily will want him. (If the producers of the *Mad Max* series find Mel Gibson too expensive these days, they might consider giving Steve a call for the sequel.)

The makers of *Don't Tell Her It's Me* seem to have had little idea of what direction to take. For example, it is stressed at the beginning that Gus is a comic artist — the film even has a cartoon credit sequence — but, that aspect is almost completely dropped. What we do get is some insight into Viveca's profession in a mildly satirical scene at a "Loveboree," a convention of Harlequin romance-type writers.

Be that as it may, Emily eventually falls for Gus after his miracle transformation, never suspecting that it is the same pathetic soul she met several months before at a disastrous dinner party (disastrously unfunny, that is). What results is a dual identity farce that leads to a predictable, though not entirely convincing resolution.

By the way, it would appear

that this film is the latest example of corporate sponsorship in the cinema: the viewer is lead to believe that riding a Harley Davidson will have the babes swooning.

It's mostly Guttenberg's show. As for the rest of the cast: Gertz looks great and Long is as annoying as ever. The only film in which her pretentious persona worked

was the 1987 hit *Outrageous Fortune*.

As for everybody's Special Agent Cooper (MacLachlan), there's too little for him to do in this movie to tell where his career outside of the weird world of David Lynch may be headed. Perhaps he should heed the advice Long didn't and hang on to his day job.



by Andrew Kyprianou

*Dead Pit* directed by Brett Leonard produced by Imperial Entertainment Corp.

Have we all had just about enough of the infamous zombie flick? Apparently not, for every year a dozen — if not more — of these wonderfully directed pieces of cinematic art are made for the big and small screen (not necessarily in that order).

One recent addition to the horror section of the video shelf is *Dead Pit*. The premise: a self-professed brilliant doctor, portrayed effortlessly by talentless actor Danny Gochner, uses his mentally ill patients for diabolical experiments. The doctor's devilish deeds are found out, he is shot in the head by a colleague, Doctor Swan (Jeremy Slate), and buried beneath the mental institution; hence, the dead pit.

All of this information was jotted down at annoying ten second intervals between the four hour scroll of credits at the beginning of the film. But, if that isn't enough to keep you on the edge of your

couch, perhaps the easy flowing script by Gimel Everett and Brett Leonard's direction will intrigue you. Fasten your seatbelts, cuz you're in for a bumpy ride.

Twenty years later, a lovely buxom young woman (Cheryl Lawson), known only as Jane Doe due to a case of amnesia, is admitted into the same mental institution where all these terrible incidents occurred. How surprising!

Throughout, the dialogue is snappy: "Damn it Ramzi!" pleads Doctor Swan, "I don't even know you any more!" In addition, Leonard's artsy direction is illuminated by a close up of Ramzi's cold blue eyes, prompting us to open ours and await the symbolic words: "You never knew me, Swan."

Is this suspense, or what?

But, wait; there's more. The scene with the dignified Dr. Swan pathetically begging for his life is particularly interesting. His exact words? "Please . . . don't cut my brain!" Now, that's writing!

Unlike most films of its type, *Dead Pit* makes no attempt whatsoever to add witty lines or a hum-

orous story. Instead, the viewer is given the impression that this is meant to be taken as a "serious" picture that should not be lumped together with films like *The Plant People* and *Night of the Living Dead*.

The long and short of it is simply that this type of movie is not serious; no matter what the director tries to accomplish, he is fighting an uphill battle. Can a movie be taken seriously when its video box has beady little green eyes that flash on and off when you press the zombie's hand?

And, what about the special effects? Well, there are hardly any, and what there is is blatantly cheap. The old throwing-the-holy-water-on-the-zombie trick is used, sending the dead beat into a wailing frenzy of pain as his flesh is eaten away by the blessed liquid. Lovely.

By the end of the film, many questions remained unanswered ("Why?" being one of the more obvious ones). Like its title, *Dead Pit* deserves to be placed in a pit — a very deep one.



Steve Guttenberg, Jami Gertz and Shelley Long share a moment in *Don't Tell Her It's Me*. Don't tell anybody you saw this movie.

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