

Film

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Director: Frank Oz

It all started with one of Roger Corman's classic quickie horrors in 1960, an idea taken up by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken in 1982 and turned into a successful off-Broadway musical. Here was every nerd's nightmare and wish-fulfilment rolled up into one: Seymour Krelborn (Rick Moranis), to win the love of Audrey (Ellen Greene), has to not only ward off Audrey's psycho-sadist dentist, but also cope with the ever tyrannical demands of Audrey II, the ever-growing, man-eating plant that Seymour has been fostering in the plant shop where he works.

The score itself is a neat pastiche of early 60s music and occasionally, as in the song 'Skid Row (Downtown)', it's closer to plagiarism than parody. This 60s sensibility is the dominant theme of the show — right through to the trio of black girl singers who rejoice in the names of Crystal, Chiffon and Ronette. Even Steve Martin's dentist is described at one point as Leader of the Plaque.

Does this nudging nostalgia trip come off? Apart from a perilous drop in energy just before Audrey II takes her revenge, it's a pretty tight show. Frank Oz, whose last film was *The Muppets Take Manhattan*, makes a star of Audrey II, so much so that Miss Piggy might well be stomping her little hooves in envy. Mind you, Miss Piggy never had the advantage of Levi



Ronette, Chiffon and Crystal discover that the 'Little Shop of Horrors' is not a Phil Spector production.

Stubbs of the Four Tops to do her vocals!

Oz handles the set numbers well, too. 'Downtown,' opened by the wonderful Bertrice Reading, reminded me of the first song of *Absolute Beginners* with its free-roving camera and the kitsch *Better Homes and Gardens* fantasy of Audrey I ("I cook like Betty Crocker and look like Donna Reed") is beautifully judged. Out of a succession of doll cameos (Bill Murray, John Candy, James Belushi), Steve Martin's dentist is wonderfully manic, meeting an appropriately hysterical end as he ODs on nitrous oxide.

William Dart

CRIMES OF THE HEART

Director: Bruce Beresford

Beth Henley's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Crimes of the Heart*, was a delicate and rather fey portrait of the interaction of three sisters in the deep South, brought together for the first time in some years. A little like a low-key Tennessee Williams (it's difficult not to compare the women's dying Granddaddy to the mortally ill Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), its strength as a play was its claustrophobic intensity which was part and parcel of its theatrical setting.

On the screen, there are a few problems. One is the serious lack of incident — Sissy Spacek's attempted murder of her husband is the only real "event" of the film. The other is the insecurity of tone,

which skeeters between sentimentality and black comedy as quickly as Spacek does from sanity to insanity. A more incisive directorial approach could have made the material gel together much better: Beresford seems infallibly to make the wrong cut at the wrong moment over and over again, his crude handling of the breakfast scene being one obvious example.

As the three sisters, Jessica Lange, Diane Keaton and Sissy Spacek play beautifully, but too often it is Beresford who detracts from the impact of their performance. Sam Shepard as Doc Porter is a mere plot device, a momentary diversion for Lange, although Tess Harper's bitchy cousin/neighbor and Hurd Hatfield's touching portrait of the women's grandfather are splendidly done; the scene in which Harper writhes into a pair of small pantyhose is quite unbelievable.

Ultimately, if you really want to see a film about sisterly dynamics, Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters* is still playing around some theatres ...

William Dart

Video

Godzilla 85 (New World)

The return of the Big G. Back to his old stomping grounds, beating the shit out of Tokyo's skyscrapers and transit system. (You ever notice that monster flicks always have some beast tipping trains up?) Back in 1954 Toho Productions unleashed this lovable green creature with the radioactive breath, and the original suit designed by Giji Tsuburaya is still in use.

The present Godzilla is a mean mother, not the wimp of the middle period as in *Godzilla vs Megalon* (1973), where he helps Jet Jaguar defeat the evil monsters. No, this time Godzilla is out to kick arse.

Metaphorically speaking, the monster is the living symbol of nuclear war, the psyche that continually haunts Japan. All *Godzilla* movies are protests against the US bombings. All that aside, *Godzilla 85* is a great disaster flick, with a very high body count (much

higher than *Commando*) and with acting that verges on the hysterical. Raymond Burr gives a superb performance in a role Orson Welles would have killed for, if he hadn't been busy doing the voice of a Transformer robot, his last tragic role.

Trash fans will be salivating over this, but to the rest of you, I can only say it's not exactly *Children of a Lesser God*, but it has its moments.

Kerry Buchanan

Stones in the Park (CEL)

It's difficult deciding what would be more interesting — the Rolling Stones breaking up, or making another album. But here they back at their 1969 Hyde Park free concert, remarkably composed just two days after Brian Jones' death. This hour-long doco (at the budget price of \$30) is no *Gimme Shelter*; the sound is primitive and the cameraman can't seem to concentrate on anything for long. But there are plenty of shots of pale, greasy British hippies — and even more ludicrous are the British Hells Angels, a motley bunch of fashion-mongers about as frightening as Sha Na Na.

You've also gotta laugh at Mick's stoned philosophising and ridiculous 'Satisfaction' rap. Keith looks his best/worst, depending on how you take the myth — masacared and toothless with the pallor of a cadaver. Musically, new recruit Mick Taylor carries the day, giving the band their purest blues sound — rough and raw slide on 'Love in Vain' and, as always, "master of the boogieing jam" on 'Sympathy for the Devil', the highlight. A curiosity.

Chris Bourke

Frank Sinatra Portrait of an Album (CEL)

When Frank Sinatra sang 'LA is My Lady' at a recent London concert he forgot his words, his ginned brain presumably not being able to decide what LA was. I didn't know "lady" was in his vocabulary. This hour-long doco shows the making of *LA is My Lady*, the album Sinatra did with Quincy Jones producing and an all-star jazz orchestra that included George Benson and Lionel Hampton. It's a pretty tame affair, with too many interviews (read: endorsements, eulogies ...) and not enough music. But what there is shows Frank to be in excellent, if

unadventurous, voice, and a master of the studio. Relaxed but not affable, Sinatra is treated with a nervous deference by those present. Among the numbers are 'Stormy Weather', 'LA is My Lady' and 'Mack the Knife.' CB

Marc Bolan on Videon (CEL)

Lovingly compiled by the Marc Bolan fan club, this 60-minute video holds an attraction to anyone with a passing interest in this mystical pop elf. Not much in the way of real early stuff here, in fact 'Ride a White Swan' is actually a mid-70s re-make. Never mind though, 'Metal Guru', 'Telegram Sam', 'Children of the Revolution', 'Get it On' and an almost live 'Jeepster' more than make up for it. Hilarious duets with Cilla Black ('Life's a Gas') and Gloria Jones ('To Know You is to Love You') coupled with the semi-metal of 'Buick McKane' and 'Jewel' make this great entertainment.

Mark Phillips

9½ Weeks (Roadshow)

A new form of art movie that has its genesis in TV ads for cars and soap powders. Movies are consumer items, so why not make them like the advertising whiz kids do? The problem is these films have no heart, they shine and purr with their strikingly clean images, and attempt to be clever with abrupt jump cuts and *nouveau vague* attitudes, but underneath it all there's no art.

Directed by the man who gave us *Flashdance* and a few toothpaste ads before that. In this he attempts a yuppie version of *Last Tango in Paris*, throwing in a few ideas from Ken Russell's wonderful *Crimes of Passion*.

Man tracks down woman, and then plays games of domination and degradation. Each scene is an attempt at sexualising each small act and object. But it doesn't work, even the "famous" bits with the food, and the hurried sex-on-the-steps bit — they all look like empty *Penthouse* spreads. Designer sex for designer people.

Just can't understand why Mickey Rourke is in this — catch Cimino's *Year of the Dragon* for his best role as the Polish cop. One of the emptiest pieces of cinema (I use that word lightly) I've ever seen. For those interested in this film's theme, wait for David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*.

Kerry Buchanan



KATE CEBERANO AND HER SEPTET

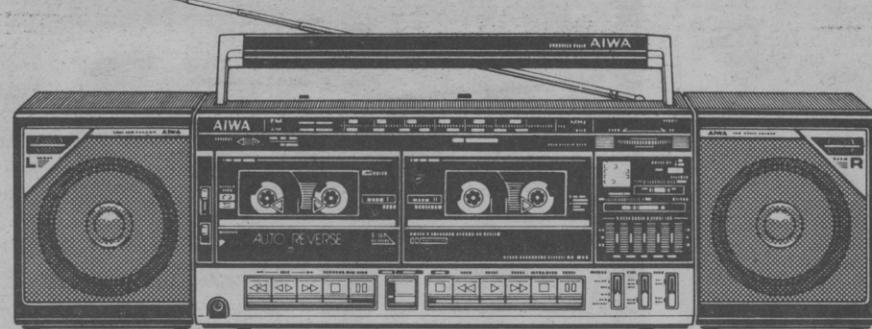
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