

ENTERTAINMENT

Theatre Society prepares 19th century costumes Mr. Pickwick wardrobe a challenge

BY STACY DUNN

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES the Mr. Pickwick production faces before its run in March is costuming. The play needs to achieve an authentic 1840's look with such things as hoop skirts and heavy wool coats. The people accepting this challenge are costumers Sue Ann Holloway and Jennifer Caseley.

Sue Ann and Jennifer, Home Economics students, are devoting about ten hours per week to preparations for Mr. Pickwick. Sometimes they work overtime to ensure that all the actors (fifty-two in total) fit into their costumes and that the costumes have that 1840's look.

Of course, much research went into this preparation. Sue Ann and Jennifer say that they are watching the movie version of Mr. Pickwick to pick up fashion ideas, and

reading all sorts of books that depict nineteenth century wardrobes. Sue Ann says that, while studying these sources, she and Jennifer note how the clothing (such as a tie) was worn, and how the different social classes dressed.

The play's characters are mainly upper middle class, presenting costuming challenges for Sue Ann and Jennifer. For example, they have to come up with fancy evening wear for a ball scene and all-white clothing for a cricket game scene. Other difficulties include making accessories such as horse gear, and dressing women as men; however, the biggest chores ahead for the costumers are scheduling the actors' fittings, and dressing the actors backstage.

Unfortunately, Sue Ann and Jennifer cannot create every costume and accessory. Fortunately, they have outside sources which provide them with what they do not have. For

instance, the Wedding Place will donate hoops, the Confederation Center of the Arts will rent out costumes, and Sue Ann and Jennifer are going to Froggies Used Clothing to see if there are jackets and pants that could be easily altered to look like 1840's clothing. Sue Ann and Jennifer are also asking people involved in Mr. Pickwick and the university community to lend any article of clothing which could pass for mid-19th century fashion.

How can Sue Ann and Jennifer volunteer so much time to the costuming of Mr. Pickwick? They are receiving credit for the costuming from Professor McBride of the Home Economics Department. Every week, Professor McBride meets with Sue Ann and Jennifer to discuss their progress and to advise them on costume authenticity (which they will be seriously graded on). Sue Ann and Jennifer are required to write a research paper on 19th century fashion,

to provide a complete annotated bibliography, and to record every experience from this project in a journal.

Costuming for Mr. Pickwick is not only earning them credit, but also providing valuable experience. Sue Ann is interested in being a costumer for stage and screen. She says that the stage offers more impact than the screen because theatre is live and quick. The movie set, on the other hand, allows costumers to take their time preparing the wardrobe (due to the high financial aid) and fitting the actors. Sue Ann thinks that the movie industry looks better for these reasons. Jennifer plans a career as a fashion designer and looks forward to that industry's fame and fortune. Good luck to them in whatever they do in the future. However, Sue Ann and Jennifer must be praised for their hard work now.



This Week: *Dark Star*

THE FIRST THING I'D LIKE TO DO THIS is put an end to the rumours I started. For the record, this column will not be changing its name any time soon, Kevin Costner did not kill JFK (although he wasn't any better at faking a Southern accent than he was at an English one) and Elvis isn't really not really dead but possibly not alive.

And now that you're totally confused and thus susceptible to my lunatic influence, we'll start reviewing the movie.

John Carpenter is known best for his horror movies. He got his first hit with the original *Halloween*, a shockfest where nubile young women are relentlessly stalked by a

lunatic named Mike Myers (which makes it, in retrospect, the first and most macabre Wayne's World top ten: Top Ten Babes I Wanna Off This Hallowe'en... oh, I'm gonna be in trouble for that one...). But *Halloween* was not Carpenter's first feature.

The man who would go on to make his fortune in horror movies got his start by making a parody of *2001: a Space Odyssey* named *Dark Star*. It's the philosophical and occasionally disturbing account of the worst case of cabin fever ever recorded.

The story is simple. Four men, an intelligent but polite computer, at least twenty talking bombs and an alien mascot ride around the cosmos looking for unstable planets to blow up. At first, this was only one of their mission

prerogatives: they're supposed to be a scout ship like the *Enterprise* (Tm. (c)). Seeking out new life and new civilizations... but after twenty years of being cooped up in a steadily self-destructing spaceship and sleeping in the food locker, they're too damn bored to do anything but blow things up.

Add to this the fact that they've only aged three years in the twenty they've been together, there's no shore leave scheduled, the commander of the mission was killed by an exploding power seat, two of the four surviving crew have gone mildly insane, and the computer is tied up in a running argument with bomb number twenty. You've got the makings of the most hellish space journey this side of Major Tom.

This movie was made on an unbelievably small budget: about sixty thousand dollars. It shows. You can have tons of fun looking for all the cost-cutting measures. My favourites are the "food tubes" (unfrozen Mr. Freezes), the exosuits (one-piece snowsuits, packing foam, duct tape and galoshes) and the control panels on the bridge (upside-down ice cube trays, light bulbs, and old phone dials). And there are plenty more that I haven't even mentioned and don't want to.

The plot is fairly non-existent. I can't tell you anything about it without spoiling the ending. But the script and direction are great, going from realism one minute to Wile E. Coyote the next. This is, after all, a comedy. And despite being total unknowns, the actors do a good job of playing four people who are totally sick of each other. My favourite:

Pinback, the resident idiot, whose continual attempts to raise morale and build comradery are foiled by the fact that he's unbelievably annoying and boring.

Best Parts: The opening credits, which are accompanied by a cosmic country tune. Pinback trying to cheer everyone up by using springy eyeball glasses and a rubber chicken. Everyone trying to ignore him. The *Looney Toons* chase that ensues when Pinback lets the alien mascot out of its cage. Pinback getting annoyed at some special effects. Boiler playing the *Aliens* knife game and doing badly. The cheapo special effects, which are as bad as the old *Star Trek* show but done with love. The continual arguing between the computer and bomb twenty, which demonstrates that even the machines are getting sick of each other. And the ending, which requires an understanding of some basic philosophy to understand, but is still hilarious.

Best Lines: "Don't give me that 'intelligent life' crap. Find me something I can blow up!!"

The Bottom Line: Can you believe it? I've just violated my Prime Directive and reviewed an intellectual movie! It's one of the seven signs! Go rent this movie. I dare you. See if you're smart enough to get it. Go on... are you chicken?

Available At: That's Entertainment, University Avenue location.

Next Week: *Last Action Hero*: The box office bomb that everyone's watching on videocassette.