

# Brooks' 'Life Stinks' stinks

by Timm Doolen

Would you believe Mel Brooks, the master of parodies, does a spoof on the homeless? Or is it, Mel Brooks gets serious and tackles a delicate issue such as the homeless?

## Movie Review

Well both and neither. His sometimes funny, often sappy look at the homeless problem in Los Angeles is neither funny nor moving.

In a word, Mel Brooks' first movie in four years, "Life Stinks," stinks.

Brooks stars as Goddard Bolt, a ruthless billionaire who only cares about two things: money and getting more money. A rival billionaire bets Bolt some important real estate that he could not live on the streets of Los Angeles for 30 days and survive.

He takes the bet and begins his time as a bum and a beggar with virtually no connection to the outside world of the rich and famous. He soon runs into Molly (Lesley Ann Warren) who helps him stay out of trouble and find a place to eat and sleep.

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After living with the poor and destitute for 30 days, he (of course) realizes that his selfish ways are wrong and after regaining his wealth decides to build housing for those people in downtown Los Angeles. (What a big surprise!)

But the touching moments intermingled with Brooks' normal schtick doesn't work on either side of it.

For instance, we are supposed to feel remorse for an old bum who dies on the streets a short way into the movie. But in the next scene, Brooks and two other bums attempt to throw his ashes into the sea and they fly back in their face. Which is it Mel? Are we sup-

posed to laugh or cry at this man's death? The audience ends up doing neither.

And like other of his movies, some scenes are thrown in just for the sake of comic value, rather than trying to move the story along. There are several in this movie, but again, the few times I laughed could not offset the many times I felt like taking a nap.

Brooks has always done best when doing spoofs or parodies, and this could be the reason that this movie was not as good as his work in the early '70s ("Blazing Saddles," "Young Frankenstein").

But that is no excuse for putting out such a low-quality movie (even "Spaceballs" was better than "Life Stinks"). If he wanted to do a serious movie, he should have gone all the way — mixing in the schtick only makes a bad movie worse.

The only bright parts of the movie are an occasionally funny moment and some good acting by Warren as the lady bum.

But I couldn't believe the characters were real. For instance, in a romantic dance scene, Molly's hair looks beautifully groomed despite the fact that she probably hasn't had a decent shower in months.

And not only did I not understand the characters and their motivations, I honestly didn't give a damn about them. And Brooks' sudden change of heart towards the homeless was all too predictable to be taken seriously.

Even tried and true Mel Brooks fans will find this entry disappointing, though it may merit their worth at the dollar movie or on video.

If you're looking for a serious movie that addresses problems in the modern world, see "Boyz n' the Hood" or "Jungle Fever." If you want to see something really funny, try one of Brooks' previous movies on video (see box). And if you want to see a really bad attempt at a meaningful movie, see "Life Stinks."

## Brooks' 20-year career on video

Mel Brooks is known as the master of parodies, having spoofed almost every major genre: western, old horror, silent, suspense and science fiction.

After starting out strong in the early '70s, Brooks' movies have declined in quality after 1974's "Young Frankenstein."

But nonetheless there are enough funny parts in almost all of his movies to make a Brooks film worth watching. And with only really a handful of movies over his 20-year directing career, it would be easy to rent them all and see them.

"Blazing Saddles" (1972) - This takeoff on westerns is riotously funny, centering loosely on a black man becoming sheriff of a town in the path of a new railroad. There's enough sight gags and racial/sexual jokes to fill several movies over. This is one of Gene Wilder's better performances.

"Young Frankenstein" (1974) - This black-and-white film is mostly a parody of all those old Frankenstein movies in their various incarnations. Gene Wilder is the distant relative of Frankenstein with Marty Feldman, Terri Garr and Madeleine Kahn in supporting roles.

"The Producers" (1968) - This is Brooks' first feature film, with Gene Wilder as the glib accountant who helps aging producer Zero Mostel in a Broadway scam. They get hundreds of thousands of dollars of support for a show they are sure will flop, and plan to run away with the excess money. But their would-be flop, "Springtime for Hitler" ends up being a hit comedy, and their plans lead them to trying to blow up the theater the play is in.

Others:  
"High Anxiety" (1977)  
"Spaceballs" (1987)  
"History of the World Part I" (1981)  
"Silent Movie" (1976)  
"To Be or Not To Be" (1983)  
- T.D.

# 'Northern Exposure' actor finds long-lost daughter in Texas

SEATTLE (AP) - Shannon Ross loved the farmer in the Birdseye broccoli commercial long before she found out he was her father.

As for actor Barry Corbin, he couldn't have been happier when he learned he had a cowgirl for a daughter in his hometown of Texas.

Reality can be quirkier than a script of "Northern Exposure," the TV hit that features the 50-year-old Corbin as Maurice, a wealthy landowner in rural Alaska.

"Our case is kind of a rare one," Corbin, a resident of suburban Redmond, said. "When we talk, it's like talking to a mirror image. We are constantly reaching out and touching each other's faces. We hold hands. It's kind of disconcerting to her husband and my wife."

The actor discovered in late June he had a 26-year-old daughter, when Ross, who was adopted as an infant, tracked down her biological parents.

Ross's mother gave her baby up for adoption at San Antonio's Methodist Mission Home in February 1965 without telling Corbin she was pregnant with his child.

Ross, a resident of Arlington, contacted her natural parents to check on possible genetic problems affecting her 18-month-old son. Ross's mother, who asked that her name not be used, initially wouldn't tell Ross who her real father was for fear of disrupting

his life. Then she softened.

"She told me he was an actor, then she told me his name and it didn't ring a bell," Ross said from Arlington in a telephone interview. "She said, 'He's on a TV show called 'Northwest Territory' or something.' I said, 'Could it be 'Northern Exposure?'"

The CBS sitcom that features a young doctor from New York City working in an Alaskan town where moose stroll the streets is one of Ross's favorite programs. It is filmed in Roslyn, Wash. about 75 miles east of Seattle and the Puget Sound area.

"I went through everybody on the show. I thought the doctor is too young, I thought of Holling (the bartender-mayor), but then thought, 'No, he's got blond hair,'" Ross said. "When I thought of Maurice, I felt something really strange in my stomach."

Ross admired Corbin long before she realized there was any connection.

"He's on a broccoli commercial and everybody knew I loved that broccoli commercial," Ross confided. "It's about Birdseye broccoli with the dog next to him. I loved the way he talked and he seemed like a real nice guy."

Originally from Lubbock, Corbin said he dated Ross's mother in the spring of 1964. She phoned him in June of that year when he

was playing summer stock there in Colorado to announce she was pregnant. But a few weeks later she called back to say it was a false alarm.

According to Ross, her mother did not tell Corbin about the baby because he would have felt compelled to get married and possibly cut short his acting career. Instead, Ross's mother lived for months at the Methodist center, then an adoption home for unwed mothers.

Ross, a graduate student who plans to get a Ph.D. in psychology, was adopted by a doctor and his wife from Arlington, shortly after birth. She grew up riding and showing horses, a passion she also has in her adoptive family share.

But Corbin, who dresses in cowboy hat, boots, Wrangler jeans and a big, silver, rodeo belt buckle, understands just how she feels.

Strangers for 26 years, the father and daughter share the same favorites in country music and cowboy western movies. Corbin borrowed Ross's spurs in a recent visit to Texas and won first place for cutting cattle at a Fort Worth competition.

Relatives say the two look alike. When Ross learned about Corbin, she rented home videos of his movies "Urban Cowboy," "War Games," "White Hunter, Black Heart" and "Critters: The Main Course."

## McLennan's latest too obscure, vague

Continued from page 5

humanity, but his confidence that he won't find it in any earthly church.

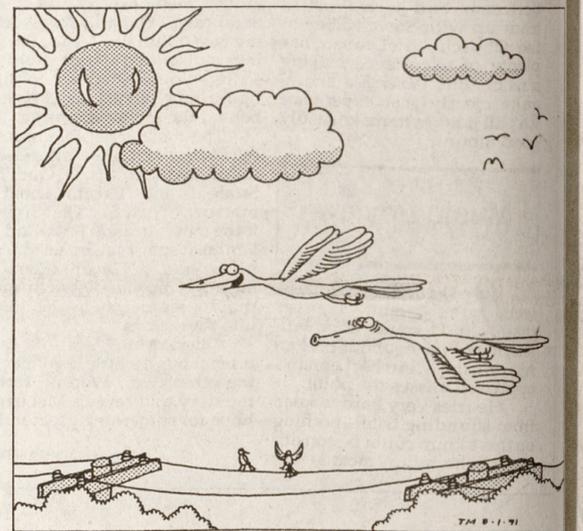
I can dig the message behind "You Can't Have Everything," McLennan's warning against materialism. Lines like "You've got the Philharmonic playing happy birthday" score points for originality. But the song just doesn't flow; each line needs to build up the message he wants to get across, but instead, the ideas don't connect.

And that's it. Twelve songs on a record, and only five that I find something interesting in. Definitely not going to spin for hours in my player — maybe a few turns for those few songs, but far from a classic.

Fans of McLennan's earlier projects may dig it, but Watershed is nothing to get excited about. McLennan tries too hard to be original; by doing so, he misses the common bond that musical poetry can share with his listeners.

## Nerd House

by Tom A. Madis



"THAT'S NOTHING. I'VE NAILED HERBERT FROM A HEIGHT OF OVER 1200 FEET. GOD, IT WAS BEAUTIFUL!"

# Around Town

## Music

Information is provided by the individual nightclubs and is subject to change.

**AnNam Tea House**  
At Northgate at 103 Boyett. All ages admitted. Call 846-2898 for more information. Thursday - KANM benefit with four local bands. Starts at 9 p.m. \$2 cover with KANM t-shirt, \$3 cover without. Friday - Spirits & Trains. Rock. Starts at 9:30 p.m. \$3 cover. Saturday - Shoulders. Rock. Starts at 9 p.m. \$3 cover. Tuesday - Texas Poetry

**Showcase.** Starts at 8 p.m. Cover charge. Wednesday - Pat Mears. Blues. Special guest: The Implications. Starts at 9 p.m. \$3 cover.

**Gallery Bar**  
In the College Station Hilton at 801 E. University Drive. Only ages 21 and older admitted. Call 693-7500 for more information. Thursday - Karla Lack. Piano. Starts at 5:30 p.m. No cover. Friday, Saturday - Eugene Eugene. Jazz. Starts at 7 p.m. on Friday, 8 p.m. on Saturday. No cover.

**Kay's Cabaret**  
At Post Oak Mall. Ages 18 and older admitted. Alcohol served.

For more information, call 696-9191. Friday - Don Overby. Acoustic guitar. Starts at 9:30 p.m. \$1 cover. Saturday - Rhythmatics. Rock. Starts at 9:30 p.m. \$2 cover.

**Sneakers**  
In College Station at 504 Harvey Road. Ages 18 and older admitted. Alcohol served. For more information, call 696-8888. Wednesday - Sneaky Pete. Sing-along. Starts at 9 p.m. \$2 cover.

**Texas Hall of Fame**  
On FM 2818 in Bryan. Alcohol served. For more information, call 822-2222. Thursday - Special F/X. Country.

Starts at 8 p.m., doors open at 7 p.m. \$3 cover (\$1 off with TAMU ID). Friday - Special F/X. Country. Starts at 9 p.m., doors open at 8 p.m. \$5 cover. Saturday - Southern Blend. Country. Starts at 9 p.m., doors open at 8 p.m. \$4 cover.

**Equinox**  
Located at 329 University Dr. in College Station. Alcohol served. For more information, call 846-2496. Thursday - Rock-a-Fellas. Rock. Starts at 9 p.m. \$2 cover. Friday - 'N the Rutz. Rock. Starts at 9 p.m. \$3 cover. Saturday - Rif Raf. Rock. Starts

at 9 p.m. \$2 cover. **Sundance Club**  
Located at 801 E. University Dr. in the Hilton. Ages 19 and older admitted. Alcohol served. Call 693-7500 for more information. Sunday - "Dance by the Pool" with The Change. Starts at 3 p.m. Wednesday - The Change. Rock. Starts at 9 p.m.

**Comedy**  
Information is subject to change. **Garfield's**  
Located at 1503 S. Texas Ave.

Reservations recommended. Ages 21 and older admitted. Alcohol served. Call 693-1736 for more information. Thursday - Chuck Montgomery and Mark Mabray. Starts at 9 p.m. Tickets: \$4 in advance, \$5 at door.

**Sundance Club**  
Located at 801 E. University Dr. in the Hilton. Ages 19 and older admitted. Alcohol served. Call 693-7500 for more information. Thursday - Jimmy Mack and Chip Flatow. Starts at 8 p.m. Tickets: \$4 in advance, \$5 at door.

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