



BY Trent Drake

## This Week: The Rocky Horror Picture Show

**Disclaimer:** The movie review to follow was originally meant to tie in with last week's gay/lesbian/bisexual issue. Due to an extenuating snowstorm, I missed the deadline. If you are a homophobic/red neck/Reform party member, you should not partake of the film reviewed as it may cause you to lose muscular tension in your wrist and lead to severe bouts of open-mindedness.

**Mike:** It's brilliant.

**Dave:** It's brilliant.

**Peter:** (In a tone of utter despair) Oh Man...

**Nola:** It's so funny.

**Chris:** It's weird. But I like it.

**Wanita:** It's stupid.

**Jennifer:** It's just... stupid.

**Amanda:** It's just, like, sooo stupid.

**Hal:** It's just fucking stupid.

**Ralph:** It reminds me of Robert A. Heinlein.

Me? I thought it was a movie.

The opinions expressed above are the diverse and fanatic reactions several friends and family (who will never forgive me for this) had to a single videotape viewing of Rocky. Obviously it's not for everyone. I wonder why?

This week I'm doing something I swore I'd never do. Instead of reviewing an obscure sci-fi cheapo backyard flick or an over-expensive big name moron movie, as I am wont to do, I'm taking a chance and reviewing something that has a large and fanatical cult following. The Rocky Horror Picture Show is the cult movie, with fans dressing up in weird costumes and performing bizarre and hilarious rituals at every theatrical showing. I won't attempt to explain it... I'm just a humble movie reviewer.

T.R.H.P.S. is the story of two typical, whitebread, plain vanilla, horrifyingly normal All-American kids named Brad Majors and Janet Weiss. En route to the home of

their friend, Dr. Scott, they get a flat tire. Caught in a pounding rainstorm, they seek shelter at a creepy house. Unfortunately for them, the house also shelters a large convention of Transylvanians. Even worse, the host of the convention is a rake-skinny, alien, treacherous, lecherous, transvestite mad scientist by the name of Doctor Frank N. Furter.

Frank is building his greatest creation: a large, muscular dream man name of Rocky. Frank's affections frighten Rocky and make the housekeepers, Riff and Magenta, very jealous. Rocky spends most of the film either running away or grunting incoherently... and that's only the beginning...

As the evening progresses, Frank seduces both Janet and Brad into the warm, wet world he inhabits. And so a kind of plateau is reached: Frank has done it with almost all the major characters (except the poor, jealous housekeepers), but the peace is short-lived. Frank is a man driven by only two motivations: Self preservation and a raging libido. When Doctor Scott shows up at the mansion (thus threatening Frank's existence, 'cause he thinks Scott is a U.F.O. investigator) and Rocky turns out to have eyes only for Janet (thus making Frank's enormous libido jealous) Frank's last wall of sanity crumbles and he uses his advanced technology to force Brad, Janet, Scott, Rocky and Columbia (Frank's female interest) into performing in drag in a large scale MGM style production number.

The movie ends on a sad note. Riff and Magenta, fed up with Frank's maniacal screwing around (and tired of strange, alien elbow-sex rituals), report him to their superiors on the home planet of Transsexual

in the galaxy Transylvania, take command of the mansion, kill Frank and Rocky in a scene that parallels King Kong and send Brad and Janet back into the normal world... sore but far more openminded than they arrived.

Sounds simple, straightforward and perfectly normal, doesn't it? As I said before, this is the b-movie cult film. Its credentials are impeccable: a London stage play turned Broadway production that

garnered enough of a following that the studios decided to make a movie. They hired most of the original London cast (including Tim Curry and the playwright, Richard O'Brien) plus a few cheap extras, gave them \$1,000,000 dollars and said, "Here. Do a movie version." It was released in 1975 with little fanfare and got good reviews but not much else. But when theatres showed it as part of their 'midnight' cinema programs, it suddenly picked up an audience. A very large audience.

Why all the fuss? Well, at the time it was kind of shocking. Even though there's little overt nudity (see below) the material is a bit much for people to take. It's also possibly the most deliberately horrible movie since Plan 9 From Outer Space (a perfectly normal but incredibly awful film that I do not recommend). It was made partly to pay homage to old sci-fi flicks of the '50s, so while everyone turns in a stellar performance, giving you a deeper understanding of characters you may not want to know, most of them are given to bad acting on purpose. The idea is to do everything so badly that it looks really good; a strange approach, but it works. There's even a cameo role by Meat Loaf as a typical 1970's biker punk. The best actor is Tim Curry as the ultimate tragic madman. Indeed, the moral of the whole film might as well be, "I'm not evil, I just dress in women's clothing." Nods also go to Barry Bostwick for playing a completely typical jerk to stone-faced perfection, and to Rocky for grunting on cue.

As for the production, well, the sets are marvels of economy (there are only six or seven interiors in the mansion). Look at the walls during certain scenes to see a black-and-white Mona Lisa used over and over. Now we finally know what she's grinning at. And the music is great, even if the singing isn't.

Also take time to admire the special effects, which are on a par with the old Batman t.v. show. My favourite: the red lightning bolts that shoot from Riff's pitchfork laser gun.

Scenes to Watch For: Well, it's not so much what you watch for as what you do once certain scenes appear. As I mentioned before, there are certain rituals to be enacted once you've seen the film a couple times. These rituals involve funny props and one-liners said and thrown in response to the action on the screen. This super-advanced form of heckling occurs at almost every theatrical showing of T.R.H.P.S. and is both extremely messy and a lot of fun. We'll skip the "audience script" and get straight to the fun part: How To Make A Mess.

**The Props:** Rice (throw during wedding scene and when Frank leads Rocky into the bedroom); newspapers (hold over head when Brad and Janet run through the rain); squirt gun (to spray at other people's newspapers when Brad and Janet run in the rain. Be warned: since the advent of the Super Soaker this ritual has gone from a mild dampening to a full-scale soaking); a lighter (for when B & J sing "there's a light..."); toast (for when Frank calls for a toast, of course); playing cards (flick at screen when Curry's scottish accent slurs lyrics to say "cards for sorrow, cards for pain..."); and a roll of toilet paper (throw at screen when Brad yells "Great Scott!"). This is a personal favourite of mine. I got hit in the forehead with one).

**Favourite Line:** When Frank kills Eddie with a pickaxe, everyone yells, "Now Frankie, that's no way to pick your friends!"

**Bottom Line:** This review is too long already. I'll be brief: It's not for everyone, but the only way to find out is to risk watching it; however, if you don't like the sounds of it from this review, chances are good you'll be disturbed. It's not too shocking, the only nudity happens by accident (Columbia's nipples pop out of her dress during the closing number) and the music is great fun. If you can find a midnight showing sometime, take a friend and go... you'll probably need the support. Available At: Anywhere.

**Next Week:** This year's Turkey Dinner wraps up with a special review of several lesser-known, non-Disney cartoons.

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