

Brooks 'High Anxiety' is giant leap to comedy nowhere

By J. Marc Mushkin

Mel Brooks must think he is the funniest man on earth.

Why else would he cast himself in his new movie, *High Anxiety*, with virtually no funny lines? I guess he thinks that by just being there on screen he will bring the house down with laughter. Well, Brooks is on screen plenty, but the laughs don't come.

This is his sixth film—the very point in his career when one would expect his work to be maturing—but I think it represents a giant leap nowhere in his development as a comedian.

movie review

Brooks parodied the western in *Blazing Saddles*, the horror classic in *Young Frankenstein*, and the silent comedy in that bomb *Silent Movie*. Now surprise! another parody! This time Brooks works over Alfred Hitchcock's suspense thrillers.

Brooks antics probably will look at *High Anxiety* and say "Oh boy, he's at it again," but I say, "Oh NO! Not again?"

The plot centers around Dr. Thomdyke (Brooks) who takes over the Psycho-Neurotic Institute for the Very, Very Nervous.

It is a simple-minded and uninteresting view of psychiatry. Brooks seems limited to setting up gags as if they were in a short TV sketch, not a feature length movie.

The rest of the plot is just a series of events designed to put Brooks in locations and situations reminiscent of Hitchcock's films.

That is why the film seems so soggy and uninspired. Brooks just shows up under the Golden Gate Bridge (no joke, he just happens to be there) and expects us to say "ooh, yeah. *Vertigo*, right?"

At least his references to *The Birds* and *Psycho* have jokes attached, but they still are just references. Are we supposed to be impressed that Brooks, too, has seen those movies?

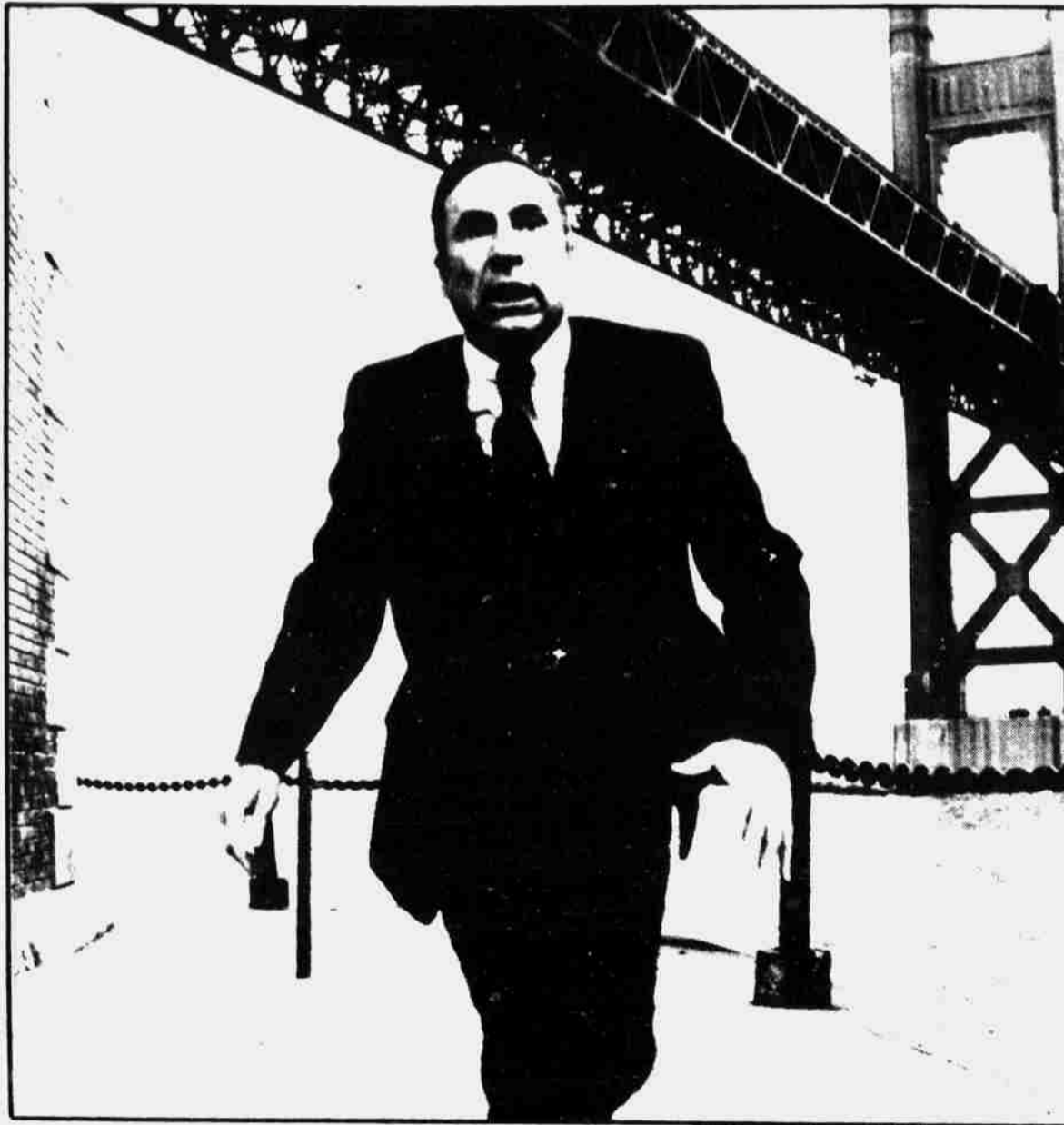
What really hurts is the hotel clerk's mentioning that a Mr. MacGuffin (referring to Hitchcock's term for the object of pursuit in a thriller) had changed Dr. Throndyke's reservation. That did it. What does Brooks think comedy is anyway? Should we laugh because Brooks tells us that he is familiar with Hitchcock? Is that funny?

Brooks dedicated *High Anxiety* to "the master of suspense," Hitchcock, but the

film makes nonsense out of the idea. In *Young Frankenstein* Brooks knew that he had to reproduce some of the atmosphere

and aura of the Frankenstein movies to be effective in parody.

Continued on page 8



Mel Brooks runs for his life in *High Anxiety*.

Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox



Photo by Ted Kirk

Members of the UNL Dance Ensemble rehearse "Salt Lake City Rag," choreographed by Bill Evans of the Bill Evans Dance Company in Seattle, Wash.

Dance ensemble's program features guest choreography

The UNL Dance Ensemble, a student organization formed to offer performance practice for dancers, will present its third annual concert tonight and Saturday. Both performances begin at 8 in Kimball Recital Hall.

Gayle Kassing and Barbara Mason, co-directors of the company and dance instructors at UNL, said the program this year consists of seven dance arrangements including works by two guest choreographers.

Conference of the Birds is a Donald Bradburn composition done in November 1977 for the UNL Dance Ensemble. Some of his other works have been done on the NBC, CBS and PSB television networks including ballet, modern and jazz choreography.

Bill Evans choreographed the second guest arrangement, *Salt Lake City Rag*, in 1977 under commission for UNL. At that time Evans was working in Salt Lake City. That is so that was the reason for the title. Now Evans is director of his own group, the Bill Evans Dance Company, in Seattle.

The other pieces were choreographed by Kassing and Mason. The Kassing choreography is *Sonatine* and *Reminiscences of a Waltz*. Mason's works are *Temporal*

Matters, *Elegy in Grey* and *Epilogue*.

The concerts this year feature the talents of sixteen dancers: Julie Boyum, Amy Critchfield, Maureen McKeena, Stephen S. Cholka, Shawn Farley, Jolaine Kaminski, James H. Flynn III, Dan Blythe, Edson Gibson, Patty Hofmann, Cheryl Moody, Connie O'Nele, Michael A. Thomas, Taffy Wroughton, Clifford Bett's and Barbara Ball Mason.

Costume designs are by Robert Hillestad (a UNL professor of textiles, clothing and design), Linda Schriener, Donald Bradburn and Barbara Mason. Lighting design is by UNL theater student James Ryan.

Bill Frankhauser is the stage manager and Crystal Craft is his assistant. Catherine Lohmeier is the sound operator.

Original music for *Temporal Matters* will be provided by the Lincoln Improvisation Ensemble. Members of that group are Randall Snyder, Tom Malone, Mike Bergstraesser and Warren Shaffer.

Tickets for the concert cost \$1.50 for students (elementary school through college) and senior citizens; \$2.50 for general admission. Tickets are available at the Kimball box office (room 113 of Westbrook Music Building) and the Nebraska Union south desk.

arts and entertainment



Photo courtesy of Lincoln Jazz Society

Master trumpeter Woody Shaw third in Lincoln's concert series

An innovator in the field of jazz trumpeting will be the guest performer tonight in the third concert of the Lincoln Jazz Society Concert Series. Woody Shaw and his jazz quartet will perform at 8 p.m. in O'Donnell Auditorium on the Nebraska Wesleyan University campus.

Shaw's musical style encompasses several influences. He mastered the trumpet by the time he was 17, and during his teen-age years learned the dominant music style, bebop. He also gained experiences with the late Eric Dolphy. Other influential people in his life were pianist McCoy Tyner and saxophonist Dexter Gordon.

However, his reputation still is rising. He won the "Talent Deserving Wider Recognition" award in the trumpet

category of the 1977 *Downbeat* critics poll.

Tonight's concert also marks the homecoming of Lincoln native Victor Lewis, a drummer who left the city in 1972 to pursue a professional music career. The other members of the Shaw quartet are Carter Jefferson on tenor saxophone, Clinton Houston on bass and Onaje Gumbs on piano.

Tickets for the concert are \$4 and are available at Dirt Cheap Records at the auditorium before the 7 p.m. show!

The final offering of the Lincoln Jazz Society Concert Series will be at 7:30, 8:30, 9:30, and 10:30 p.m. on Feb. 16 performance by the Victor Lewis Trio. Additional information is available at the Lincoln Jazz Society, 1111 N. 11th St.