

# arts/entertainment

## Xanadu's entertainment ingredients lack cohesion

In *Xanadu* did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure dome ceceae

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1797)

Though *Xanadu* would seem to be aimed at an adolescent audience, a good deal of care has been taken to widen its appeal to as many age groups as possible.

While Olivia Newton-John and the Electric Light Orchestra are aimed at younger viewers, Gene Kelly and the big band sound were chosen to appeal to pre-*Grease* sensibilities. The idea of "the 40's meet the 80's" is nearly beaten in the ground in the film.

### movie review

Perhaps in the back of someone's mind was the notion of a movie that mom and dad and all the kids could all see together, share each other's music, and leave the theatre all happy about life.

But like so many things that try to please everyone, *Xanadu* may not please many at all.

It may be this lack of focus that makes *Xanadu* a failure, too many misdirected energies and nor coherence. The film has main ingredients of good entertainment: stars, lavish sets and costumes, popular music, a basis in time-honored mythic tradition and an old-fashioned love story. But for all that, *Xanadu* was initially a Warner Brothers project. Then it was taken over by Universal, the studio responsible

for its slick advertising campaign. It could be a lot of what ails *Xanadu* is just too much hype.

The people working in production, choreography, and many other aspects of the film are television veterans with little background in cinema proper. To

a pretty voice, but there is no depth behind those big eyes. How could she have inspired artists throughout the ages?

Worse yet, Newton-John is dressed up in black leather and tiger skin for several production scenes. She doesn't have a genuinely raunchy bone in her body—there

delightful; it's just too bad he doesn't do more of it.

Michael Beck was lauded for his work in *The Warriors* and TV's *Holocaust* mini-series, but *Xanadu*, doesn't give him the opportunity to show whether he can do as well with musical comedy as with drama.

*Xanadu* is full of special effects that are intended to compliment ELO's music, and they are lively and colorful, but not numerous. Once the same few devices lose their ability to surprise, they lose much of their appeal. Audiences expecting a great visual experience to match ELO will be disappointed.

There is one high-quality animated sequence which is the work of ex-Disney people who have set business on their own. It is beautiful even though the influences of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Fantasia* are a little too apparent. Now that good animation has become astronomically expensive, such meticulous and well-drawn sequences are rare. *Xanadu's* production numbers are so huge and extravagant that most of the details are lost. There is one costume change after another until watching what the stars will be wearing becomes more interesting than the performances.

The love story between the muse and the mortal man (Newton-John and Beck) and the partnership of the retired musician and the young artist (Kelly and Beck) in building *Xanadu* are also subjugated to this fashion-show flavor.

The bulk of *Xanadu's* energy has been channelled into choosing sets and costumes and into casting a couple of well-known names in major roles without regard for whether these particular individuals are suited for the parts.

This big, empty, expensive film brings to mind the *Xanadu* of *Citizen Kane*, a mansion filled with objects d'art and lonely people who would be better off elsewhere.



Photo courtesy of Universal City Studios

Michael Beck, Gene Kelly and Olivia Newton-John performing in "Xanadu."

build audiences' expectations too high may have been an injustice to such inexperienced filmmakers.

Olivia Newton-John (as Kira the muse), though she hasn't the disadvantage of being cast as a 30-year-old high school student as she was in *Grease*, doesn't seem to be the stuff muses are made of. She is generally likeable and she has

seems to be some kind of misunderstanding about her screen image.

Gene Kelly's forte is his dancing rather than his dramatic performances. Since the former is cut to a minimum, in *Xanadu*, we are left with long gaps

for Kelly to kill by crinkling up his eyes and grinning. When he does dance, it is

## Actor makes political statement with characters

By Doreen Charles

Charles Pace, Centennial's Artist-in-Residence, had a chance to not only display his "solo art" form technique, but also to deliver a message to the audience in his Wednesday night portrayal of Frederick Douglass.

"I choose to portray characters that appeal to me as characters. They may say something I agree with and want to say to the audience," Pace said.

Frederick Douglass, an 18th century slave who rose to become an internationally known orator in the abolitionist movement, exhibited many striking parallels to modern day figures such as Malcolm X, Pace said. There are some strong similarities between the philosophies of Malcolm X and Frederick Douglass, Pace said.

"They both were advocating the liberation of black people. They first went through a liberation of self, then of black people, then took an international view and went to the liberation of all oppressed people," he said.

### Responses vary

Audience responses to Pace's performances vary because of unfamiliarity with the art form and inability to identify with the content, he said.

"The most receptive audiences tend to be elderly black people in the South," Pace said. "Whites can't emotionally identify with a character like Frederick Douglass. They become defensive."

Pace has also performed before inmates at the penitentiary and said that because of the depth of their experiences they could relate better to his performance.

"Prison audiences are so much more advanced than college audiences," he said.

In Pace's performance of Malcolm X, which is compiled of excerpts of speeches and narratives from his autobiography, the audience plays a direct role, serving as the audience which Malcolm had spoken.

When doing a character such as Malcolm X or Frederick Douglass, Pace said he sometimes tells white audiences to "pretend they are black" in order to view the play with more objectivity.

### Whites feel threatened

"Some whites feel threatened by a character like Malcolm. Some blacks may feel threatened, because of

the image of him that has been projected," he said. In portraying these characters, Pace said he can make a political statement without being personally involved.

"I speak politically through my characters. My life is not political at all in terms of being an activist," he said.

In addition to Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X, Pace also portrays 15th century English King Richard III. In his other show, entitled "Theater in Black" he portrays 8 or 9 different characters.

Pace's technique, although alien to many audiences, has been used by other performers. Actor Billy Dee Williams does a one man show on Martin Luther King entitled "I Have a Dream," and actor James Earl Jones does a performance on Paul Robeson.

Pace said he plans to take a tour of African countries and establish formal links with African artists in order to develop an international theater of the black world.

### Tell Africa about America

"I intend to find out as much as possible about Africa

and tell them as much as possible about black America," he said.

Pace said he also plans to set up a school in order to teach his solo art form and invite black people from all over the world to be students. He said he intends to make records and films of his solo performances and "develop a black cultural and artistic community to pursue topics and projects for the benefit of black people on a world wide basis."

"Culture is the most significant aspect of a people. It's their politics, their religion, their economics—it's the sum total of all that they are," he said. "Blacks are culturally deprived as far as their knowledge of each other."

Pace will be performing Oct. 1 at 8:00 p.m. in the Union Ballroom. The show will consist of his "Theater in Black" performance, followed by a portrayal of Malcolm X, and ending with a seminar on the creative process and the creation of the one person show. On Oct. 11 and 12 he will do a performance of Richard III in Sheldon Art Gallery.

## What to do blues hit on Friday

The year was 1980 and Chuck and Lynn were oh-so much in love. They knew it was love because he had let her drive his Trans Am twice in the same week, once when he wasn't even in the passenger seat. And Lynn, why, Lynn had given up her season football ticket on the 45-yard line, just behind the band, to sit with Chuck way down in the South end zone. What greater testament to Love, what more powerful statement of Devotion could a scarlet-cheeked and cream-haired Cornhusker girl make?

### pat clark

It was Friday night, so of course Chuck and Lynn were going to go out, somewhere. But where to find a suitable somewhere?

"We could go to the bars," said Chuck over the sound of the radio.

"We always go to the bars," protested Lynn, though

not very vehemently. "We've been to the bars four nights this week."

"That leaves three nights that we didn't go," countered Chuck. "We deserve a couple of beers to celebrate our show of will power over those three nights."

"The week is only five days long so far," said Lynn, trying to make her point without starting an argument. "And one of those days the bars weren't open. That makes us four out of four."

"Hate to break an average like that" said Chuck, snaking an arm around her waist.

"There's going to be lines at the bars," she said, pleading just a little. "I hate those lines."

"Okay, so we don't go the bars," conceded Chuck. "We can't just stay home. I mean, it's Friday night!"

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