

Woody Allen's 'Zelig' intriguing, intimate

By Steve Abarlotes

"Zelig" is a gorgeous little movie. While remaining quite undistinguishable from actual archive film of the Jazz Age and early Depression, and



with the narration subtly laced with the biases and prejudices of those times, we are told the story of "Leonard Zelig, The Human Chameleon."

Zelig (Woody Allen) possesses the amazing ability to turn into whoever he happens to be with. This metamorphosis takes place not only on a mental level, but on a physical one as well. That is to say that if Zelig happens to be in the company of a rabbi who has a beard, Zelig instantly grows hairy and semetic.

The irony is that Zelig wishes to "fit in" so much that he becomes a media star because of his uniqueness. "And oh, those lizard eyes."

It is the stunning Dr. Eudora Fletcher (Mia Farrow) who decides to help Zelig. In the famous "white room

sessions" with Zelig at her country estate, Dr. Fletcher employs both hypnosis and psychoanalysis to find out who the real Leonard Zelig is.

The film seems to have been contrived with most of the suspension of disbelief built in. While we are watching the equivalent of a full-length Movietone newsreel, we have no reason not to believe that there was a camera documenting the most important moments of Zelig's life. The newsreel format of the film is extremely inventive, although it evokes a somewhat nostalgic and serious mood that takes the edge away from many of Allen's jokes. Indeed, this is representative of a sort of paradox facing Woody Allen: a comic genius who wants to be accepted as a serious and artistic filmmaker.

Imagine a remake of the first five minutes of "Citizen Kane," only starring the late Peter Sellers, and stretched to 90 minutes instead of five. That sort of describes what this film is like. The comparison to "Citizen Kane" isn't audacious, this is a great film.

Although there is not much of it, "Zelig" contains some of the most clever, insightful and intimate dialogue that Allen has ever written.

The main portion of the film dealing with Zelig has been masterfully shot and edited with the archive footage. Everything from new computer "mating" techniques to the scratching of the film and the displacement of frames has been done to achieve the

authentic look and essence of an archive film.

Even the speed of the old cameras has been reduplicated in spots to account for that slightly sped-up look of the action. There is something aesthetically fascinating about archive films. Take the Jazz Age — a lost society (paradise perhaps), filled with people living life the only way they knew how and submitted for your entertainment approval.

Even with the soft focus scratchy cinematography, the real Woody Allen still manages to come through. He still loves beautiful women and the aesthetic attributes of watching sports and even the questions about the meaning of life. When Zelig asks a rabbi about the meaning of life, the rabbi answers him: only his reply is in Hebrew. The rabbi then charges Zelig \$600 for Hebrew lessons. And on his deathbed, Zelig's father advises him that life is a miserable thing that must be endured so he should save his string.

After rubbing elbows, as a writer with F. Scott Fitzgerald, as a politician with Herbert Hoover and Calvin Coolidge, as a boxer with Jack Demsey, and even as a fascist seated behind Adolph Hitler (a hilarious scene, by the way), Leonard Zelig begins to show signs of becoming himself.

The film is deceptively funny. Leonard Zelig is a self-proclaimed psychotic of the jazz age. But there is no mistaking the quality of this black and white film, it's pure gold.

'The Coronation of Poppea' to play at Kimball

Beautiful, yet intense Baroque music is in sharp contrast with the treachery and deceit of Poppea's love for the Roman Emperor Nero in the UNL Music Theatre's production of "The Coronation of Poppea," by Claudio Monteverdi. The opera will play Oct. 27 and 29 by 8 p.m. and Oct. 30 at 3 p.m. at Kimball Hall, 11th and R streets. The opera will be sung in English.

Tickets for "Coronation of Poppea" are available two ways: as part of the UNL Music Theatre season ticket or on an individual show basis. The price of the season tickets are \$9 and \$12 for general admission, \$6 and \$9 for students. Other productions scheduled for the 1983-84 season include "An Evening in Paris," Feb. 4 and 5, and "The Magic Flute," April 14 through 16.

"The Coronation of Poppea" is known as the first great historical music-drama. Created in 1642, one year before Monteverdi's death, the opera remained in obscurity until it was rediscovered 200 years later.

Individual ticket prices are \$4 and \$6 for general admission. Tickets can be purchased at the Kimball Box Office, 113 Westbrook Building from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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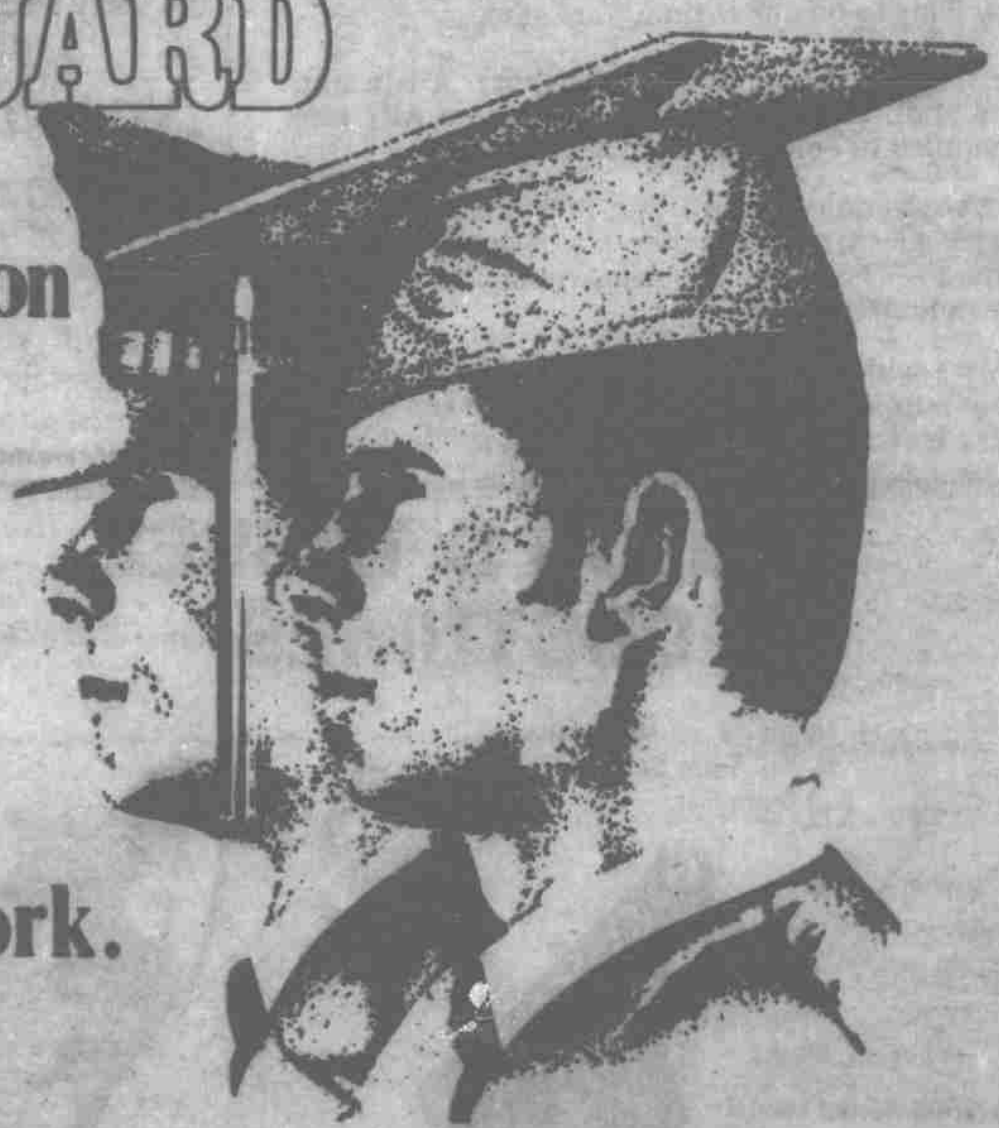
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