

# Varney as Dr. Otto displays zaniness, but minimal humor

By Mike Grant  
Staff Reporter

"There are two kinds of movies . . . this is the other kind" proclaims the ad for "Dr. Otto and the Riddle of the Gloom Beam."

This defines the film as precisely as possible.

Jim Varney stars as Dr. Otto. The name probably doesn't sound familiar, but Varney's portrayal of Ernest P. Worrell on the Robert's Dairy commercials make him one of the funniest character actors around today.

## Movie Review

The film begins with Dr. Otto inventing "The Magnetic Gloom Beam," which renders all credit cards and bank account records useless by demagnetizing their information strips. Soon all of the Western world is tottering on economic collapse.

"World domination is a thankless, grueling task," Dr. Otto says, "but someone has to do it."

A major bank in Cincinnati responds by sending out Lance Sterling (Myke Mueller), a clutzy, all-American boy, to stop Dr. Otto, his former high school classmate.

What follows are 90 minutes of high school memories, with Dr. Otto zapping all sorts of places and changing into disguises via his changing coffin.

We learn, for instance, that Lance had a model childhood, while Dr. Otto blew up his parents for Christmas. Dr. Otto changes into characters like Rudd Hardtack, an unsociable mercenary soldier; Aunti Nelda, the obese inn manager who wears a neckbrace; and Guy Dandy, a fun-seeking millionaire.

In the end, our hero Lance wins, of course. But Dr. Otto is allowed to survive, perhaps for a sequel.

"Dr. Otto and the Riddle of the Gloom Beam" was apparently made to show off Varney's versatility as a character actor. Oddly enough, the father he gets from the character of Ernest in the dairy commercials, the



Courtesy of Sweet Equities, Inc.

Jim Varney as the villain, Dr. Otto, in "Dr. Otto and the Riddle of the Gloom Beam."

less funny he gets.

Mueller as Lance Sterling is equally unfunny. While his dialogue with his secretary, Doris, is supposed to be bouncy, falls flat on its face.

The movie has witty background details like a laboratory that looks like an amusement park, a robot with a constantly changing "have-a-nice-day" face and a lead villain with a live hand implanted in his head. But all in all, there's more humor in a half-hour segment of "Benny Hill" than in this entire movie.

I kept trying to think of a term to

describe this kind of movie. My brother, who accompanied me to the screening, came up with "highly marginal." Perhaps he's being too kind, but perhaps there's something endearing about watching a low-budget movie like this make so much noise while doing so little.

So I'll give this movie a \$1.50 rating. Perhaps Varney should stick to dairy commercials until a better vehicle for his talents comes along. Know what I mean? "Dr. Otto and the Riddle of the Gloom Beam" is now playing at East Park 3 at 66th and O streets.

# If people can't stand Lincoln what are they doing here?

Here is the first of a non-exhaustive list of things that irritate me.

- People who continually complain about Lincoln. If they don't like it, why don't they do something about it, or why don't they just leave? That's what I'm doing.

- Intersections without stoplights, stop or yield signs. What are you supposed to do? If you charge through, someone might hit you. If you stop, there's never anyone there.



Tom Mockler

- People who refuse to wear seat belts because they are "confining" then refuse to drive small cars because they are "unsafe." Of course, if they want to spend the money on gas that's their problem. I don't want to give them a ride in my VW anyway.

- Ronald Reagan. The first 4 1/2 years were amusing, but the joke is growing old.

- Cockroaches. We must eradicate them. We must eliminate them.

- Whiskers. I find that if you let 4 days of dead skin build on your face, shaving isn't too bad. But then you look like a bum.

- Diet Pepsi commercials. They have two strikes against them to begin with — diet pop and Pepsi. I think the concept of diet pop is decadent. Why drink pop but for the sugar rush and the caffeine picker-upper? Oh, because it "tastes good." That's just plain hedonism. Just like non-alcoholic beer and wine.

Wait, I'm getting sidetracked. In any case, Pepsi is disgustingly sweet, and

most importantly, their commercials are crass. Diet Pepsi ads now claim they have "more real cola taste" than Diet Coke. How can you have more "real Cola taste"? What does that mean?

- Sprite commercials. Are we really to believe that just because it beat 7-Up in taste tests, it actually tastes better? All that means is that in their taste tests, more people preferred Sprite. That does not provide objective evidence that something tastes better.

You cannot say objectively something tastes better. If they had just blindly asserted "Sprite tastes better," it wouldn't bother me as much.

What is Lymon anyway?

- Doesn't anyone have their own opinion anymore? All these commercials talk about is freedom of choice — the freedom to choose their product. Then they say to choose their product because other people choose their product — that's individual expression for you.

- Charging for air at gas stations. That's really hitting below the belt — a little like pay toilets.

- People who handle records improperly — you really don't have to touch the vinyl surface. Also, try putting the paper sleeve in sideways, so that the record doesn't fall out when you pick up the album cover. And try to keep the dust cover on the turntable — it's there for a reason.

- Aspirin bottles. Aspirin is very cheap if you buy a bottle of 100, but how long does it take to use up 100 aspirin? Unless you have chronic headaches, a long time. The savings are purely theoretical.

And you never have the bottle with you when you need it so you have to go out and buy some more. I was once with someone who spent a dollar for a package of six.

A similar case can be made for

mayonnaise.

- It is too controversial to print (Editor's note).

## Kennedys' concert one of long series

DEAD from Page 12

After a three-year ceasefire, The Dead Kennedys are back. The show at the Omaha Civic Auditorium's Music Hall promises to be one of the most exciting events in a long series of local appearances by national acts.

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- 201 Sun Valley Blvd./475-3677

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