

Arts & Entertainment

'Hannah' predictable — and beautiful

By Charles Lieurance
Senior Reporter

Considering Woody Allen's popularity, it's amazing he's been able to keep his filmmaking territory all to himself.

After all, his neurotic, paranoid New Yorker persona isn't registered at the patent office. Any bright college philosophy major with a keen wit has the ability to turn the texts of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Hegel and Schopenhauer inside-out by applying them to the real world. The average person's concern with greater metaphysical questions end when they become accountants or piano tuners, for sanity's sake.

Allen has applied his deceptively formulaic approach to any number of genres since 1969: science fiction ("Sleeper"), the Neil Simon-type comedy ("Play it again, Sam"), film noir ("Broadway Danny Rose"), fantasy ("The Purple Rose of Cairo") and most recently, the domestic melodrama, "Hannah and Her Sisters."

Movie Review

Allen does more than just parodies, which saves him from being an overly sentimental version of Mel Brooks. Allen knows too much to slide over the surface of a genre and he's too cynical to take even his romantic nihilism too seriously. For awhile it was "hip" to be like Woody Allen, to be an intellectual, vulnerable male with all your salary invested in psychoanalysis.

Now, in the age of Rambo, Allen has taken the emphasis off himself in his films. "Interiors" and "The Purple Rose of Cairo" excluded him entirely and "Hannah and Her Sisters" casts him as an interesting bit player, like a Rosencrantz or Guildenstern, providing comic relief from the family melodrama and setting the philosophical, moral tone.

Allen casts few surprises in "Hannah." His ensemble is familiar (Mia Farrow as Hannah, Tony Roberts) and when it isn't familiar, it's predictable. Allen has the same eye for interesting faces that Fellini has, finding seductive beauty in the most eccentric of facial features. The only real surprise in casting is Michael Caine as Hannah's husband, Elliot. Caine is such a casual, matter-of-fact actor that it seems the intricacies of a Woody Allen film would bore him.

But everyone is picture perfect. The plot of the film involves so many peo-



Courtesy of Orion Pictures

Farrow, Hershey and Wiest portray the sisters in Woody Allen's new film, 'Hannah and Her Sisters.'

ple, scurrying in and out of each others lives, that one glitch in the emotional machinery would have been disastrous.

The plot of the film is engagingly simple, elaborate only because of the quantity of characters it incorporates. Hannah is the domineering, successful older sister, forced into nurturing her two sisters and enough guilt to power the average American family.

In and out of this walk husbands, ex-husbands, lovers, artists, senile parents (show people of course, from the old school), business partners, children, secretaries, theatrical directors, rock bands and enough stylistic devices to raise "Hannah and Her Sisters" from melodrama to art.

Woody Allen is always conscious of

creating art, of being artistic, of being auteur and maverick and successful all at once. Allen could do sitcoms and they'd come off like Renoir, Cukor, Fellini and Douglas Sirk all rolled into one. What's occasionally irritating is Allen's knowledge of this fact. Sometimes his philosophical asides are irritatingly predictable, but only in the context of Woody Allen. If this were a Spielberg film, all life in the film would stop dead for the off-hand comments on Nietzsche, life, death, Catholicism, Judaism and Krishna that litter this film.

But in "Hannah and Her Sisters," the audience can just relax and know exactly where Woody Allen is taking them and how he'll get there. Sure,

death is an imposing wraith, but life is what happens to you while you wait. Sure, maybe Nietzsche and Kierkegaard are right, but sex is more fun. Sure, love is fragile and tenuous, but death would be a lot harder to take without some good solid blows from Eros and Cupid.

For Woody Allen fans none of this is news is hot as the next alien birth on the cover of the Weekly World News, but his arguments are always more convincing and more sublime, more mature and filled with conviction.

If it seems as though I've missed some of the beauties the film has to offer in this review, I'll try to sum up here. The filmwork is immaculate and it's in color (always a surprise lately in

Woody Allen films). The scene in which Allen's character, faced with the chasm of eternity, opts for Catholicism, is funnier than anything he's written in a long while.

At the end of Allen's "Annie Hall" the main character tells a story about a man who walks into his analyst's office to complain of an unsatisfactory love affair with a woman who thinks she's a chicken.

"Why do you keep going back to her?" The analyst asks the man.

"Because I need the eggs." The man replies.

Why do we keep going back to Woody Allen films, if they are in many ways predictable?

We need the eggs.

Olivia Newton-John and mom in my kitchen

Vegetable dreams: the fear of the fresh

I don't go grocery shopping very often. Usually I wait until my mom is in town so she will go with me and volunteer to buy for me all those things I can't afford... like red meat and brand-name toilet paper.

Actually, budget concerns aren't my main reason for avoiding grocery stores. Mainly it's fear. I'm scared of major supermarkets.

Last night I awoke from a deep sleep and a dream about a desert island and a giant Macy's department store. I went into the kitchen for a drink of water.

Olivia Newton-John was sitting at the kitchen table putting her toes in her mouth and a woman was sauteeing mushrooms at the stove.

The woman at the stove kept saying "Fresh vegetables, fresh vegetables... mmm... They're so good for you."

She looked a lot like my mother.

Since I started college I mostly eat fast food, like burgers and fries, pizza or any of the downtown cloister of restaurant offerings.

If I ever do go to the store, it's merely to load up on Ramen Pride noodles, frozen pizzas, and the ever popular TV dinner.

Of course, the liquor stores are a different matter.



Bill Allen

A Miller beer distributor came into the office the other day to pick up a copy of the paper so he could check Miller's advertisement. It's always been a personal policy of mine to make friends with any person connected in any way with the brewing, distribution or serving of beer.

So I looked up from my desk and said, "You know, I probably drink more Miller beer than anyone else on this campus."

"Really," he said, walking over.

"Yeah, but then, I probably drink more of every other brand, too."

We talked beer for hours, then went and had a few.

Anyway, I walked over to the kitchen sink, poured a glass of water and drank it.

My mother asked me what time I'd gotten home. I said I didn't know. I asked her why she was sauteeing mushrooms at 3:30 in the morning. She smiled and turned back to the stove.

Olivia Newton-John asked me if I had a drinking problem. I said no, it's the only thing I do well.

I'm really funny like that in my dreams. I have a hundred one-liners.

Then it struck me that Olivia Newton-John probably wouldn't be sitting in my kitchen at 3:30 a.m.

"Mom, what's Olivia Newton-John doing in my kitchen?"

"I always sautee mushrooms this time of the morning," she said, "If you ever came home, you would know."

That made sense. I don't know why. "You know that list of questions that

you read to see if you're an alcoholic," I said, turning to Olivia.

"Yes," she said.

"I added two more to it."

"Really, what did you add?"

"Have you ever woke up in another state wearing clothing of the opposite sex?"

Olivia laughed. She has a nice laugh. She never asked me about the second question I added.

I walked to the refrigerator and opened the door. Suddenly a giant auto air bag exploded and slammed me against the far wall.

I woke up fast, sitting in the front seat of my car, on a railroad track. I had crashed into the red flashing light pole. The air bag was puffed up into my face. I had obviously fallen asleep at the wheel.

I heard a train whistle and saw a single bright light blaring down the tracks. I screamed and struggled against the airbag, but I was stuck. My dog, Spittle, slept peacefully beside me on the car seat.

Finally, with the train only yards

away, its brakes squealing, I tore loose from the air bag, grabbed Spittle and leaped as far as I could away from the car.

I landed on my dresser, clear across the room from my bed. Spittle yelped and bit me.

I blame the whole incident on bulk foods and fresh vegetables.

I was in a major supermarket the other day and on a wild impulse decided to load up on fresh vegetables. A guy in a white apron told me I had to put each vegetable in a separate plastic bag because they have different prices. "The same for the bulk pastas," he said.

I walked out of the store with what seemed like hundreds of plastic bags, each with barely one item — green pepper, onion, broccoli, mushrooms, beansprouts, water chestnuts, macaroni, noodles, oranges, apples and several kinds of fresh greens.

They sit in the refrigerator now. Maybe I'll cook them someday or eat them raw. Mother always said buy fresh vegetables. So I did.