

# "Smell"



types. At the top of the loathable list is Divine, a 350-pound drag queen who has starred in many Waters films and is now branching out to star in "legitimate" Hollywood fare like "Lust in the Dust."

Divine is also a disco singer who actually had a hit song in England last year called "So You Think You're a Man?" I have one of his albums, "T-shirts and Tight Blue Jeans," that contains such hot dance mixes as "Jungle Jezebel."

Divine played the crap-chowing sicko in "Pink Flamingos," the heroine in "Female Trouble," and Francine Fishpaw, the alcoholic wife of a porno magnate in "Polyester."

Then there's Edith Massey, a heavy-set bag lady with rotten teeth and a gratingly whiny voice. Edith played the Egg Lady in "Pink Flamingos," the wicked Idi Amin-loving Queen Carlotta in "Desperate Living" and Cuddles Kennedy, the cleaning lady who becomes a debutante in "Polyester." Edith, who owns a thrift shop in Baltimore, became a smash punk singer a few years back with her campy remake of "Big Girls Don't Cry."

Waters uses these ridiculous starlets to illuminate the jet-black humor in his films. He's often told interviewers that he's always looking for a neophyte actor with a bad complexion or some grotesque deformity to star in his latest epic. And his cast members don't have to be pretty because his make-up artist likes to bring out a person's "inner rot."

Waters' cinematic acumen is based on making a mockery of all that is deemed decorous, moral or desirable in society. Imaginative, bohemian-minded audiences can sense this after sitting through a Waters "disgustodrama," but more staid audiences sometimes take his humor as a threat to normality and human sobriety.

This threat is in the form of his sharp, satirical needle. His plots deal with people being smothered to death in dog food; deviants devouring rats for dinner; Divine raping himself; and mass murderers who shoot people "for art's sake." Nearly every social subject (and some that are completely anti-social) has been barbecued on screen by Waters' twisted wit.

All right, so Waters is a loony, a freak and he must've had faulty toilet training, but you've got to admire him. Hollywood blows billions of dollars each year on bad movies that purportedly have meaning and "redeeming social value," but don't. Waters spends only a fraction of what Hollywood pays, and his movies are also bad, but they claim no social value whatsoever. They're just bad for the sake of being bad, and his crews have a lot of fun making them stink. His sets have turned the backyards of Baltimore into a sleazy, cheese-oglamourama of fetishism and sactological fervor. And he's the only man who has made movies that look like The Weekly World News in full, living color.

Any man who is on the same level as articles about space aliens and dead mothers who give birth in coffins is a genius in my opinion.



"To me, bad taste is what entertainment is all about. If a person vomits watching one of my films, it's like getting a standing ovation."

— John Waters

An outrageously obese transvestite who devours dog excrement... and gets raped by a giant lobster. Click. A wacky bag lady who wears a girdle and worships eggs in a playpen. Click. A nudist on a pogo stick. Click. Click!

The above images are some of the disgusting, yet hilariously ludicrous scenes from the films of Baltimore's "King of Bad Taste," John Waters.

For two decades, Waters has been filming the slimy, sickening scenes of America's soft underbelly and has established himself as an underground cult god in the process.

Film professors at colleges from coast to coast are constantly asking him to lecture classes, critics love to hate him, fans worship him and magazines like Rolling Stone often publish articles by and about him. Why does the maker of such terribly

trashy films get such respect, you ask? Because he has a good sense of bad taste.

"I only think terrible thoughts, I do not live them," he wrote in his hysterical, off-the-wall autobiography, "Shock Value."

His shock-and-gore extravaganzas often turn your stomach, but they're suffused with such cheesy charm, you love to retch at them.

Waters started his career in 1964 with "Hag in a Black Leather Jacket," an 8mm short about an interracial couple that is wed by a Ku Klux Klansman. He later went on to make such kitschy-kitschy coup classics as "Eat Your Make-Up," "Pink Flamingos" and "Female Trouble." His most recent film, 1981's "Polyester," was filmed in "Odorama" and featured scratch-and-sniff cards so viewers could "smell" on-screen gross-outs like flatulence and moldy tennis shoes.

The most remarkable aspect of Waters' epics is his colorful cast of characters, who all are satirical opposites of Hollywood glamour

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