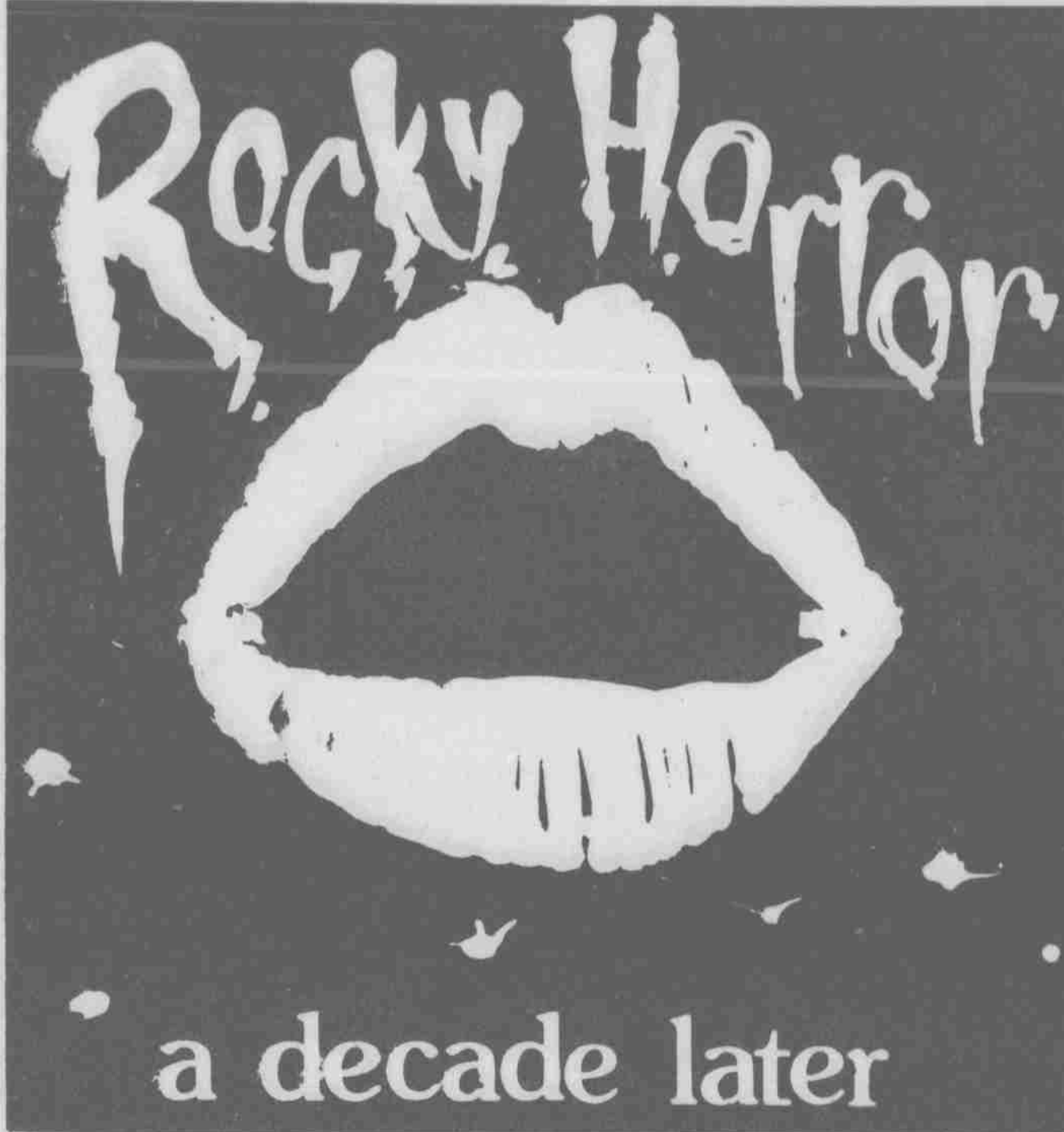


"Sight"



By Stew Magnuson
Staff Reporter

My parent's generation spent its high school years crowded around a turntable listening to Elvis. The next generation spent hours taking drugs and zonking out to psychedelic music. I spent my high school weekend nights watching a film about a "Sweet transvestite from Transsexual Transylvania," and tossing rolls of toilet paper and slices of toast at the screen.

The movie was "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," the movie that defined the term "cult film." Every weekend at midnight, my friends and I would gather at the now-defunct Admiral Theatre in Omaha and take part in a film that we thought was so ridiculous that heckling and throwing things at the screen only seemed natural. I saw the movie weekend after weekend, dozens of times.

"The Rocky Horror Picture Show" is a musical spoof of the "mad scientist makes a monster" movies.

Tim Curry plays the flaming homosexual mad scientist Dr. Frank N. Furter who, instead of an ugly monster, creates a blonde-haired Adonis for a sexual plaything. Susan Sarandon and Barry Bostwick play Brad and Janet, the wholesome American couple who have a flat tire outside of Dr. Frank N. Furter's mansion. Richard O'Brien wrote the script and music and also plays Riff Raff, Dr. Frank N. Furter's hunchback assistant.

But the movie itself was only half of the entertainment at The Admiral Theatre. When the lights went down in the theatre, total mayhem erupted.

At the opening marriage scene, everyone in the back rows got out bags of rice and pelted everyone in the front row. Later in the movie, when Brad and Janet walked through the rain with newspapers over their heads, the audience mimicked them and got out squirt guns and sprayed the aisles with water.

Yelling obscenities at the narrator was customary. Hearing his words was impossible. Throwing rolls of toilet paper when Dr. Scott appeared was tradition along with throwing toast when Frank N. Furter proposed a toast at the dinner table.

"The Rocky Horror Picture Show" became the first film in the history of cinema in which the audience participated. The audience sang along to the words, talked back to the characters and got out of their seats to do "The Time Warp," the big dance number. Some people even dressed up as the characters and played out roles in front of the screen.

Yes, those were fun nights in high school. When I came down to Lincoln for my freshman year, I discovered that the Plaza 4 showed Rocky Horror every weekend as a midnight movie as well. But a sign outside the velvet ropes warned me away.

"No squirt guns or water. No throwing of objects."

"No fun allowed" was what the sign seemed to read. The management seemed to be discouraging half the fun of the movie, so I never went back to "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" for another five years.

Last Friday I returned. The sign discouraging throwing of objects was no longer there. I went in with all my friends and got nostalgic for

my high school days.

Some things had changed. Years of "no objects being thrown" and "no squirt guns" had subdued the crowd. When it rained on the screen, it didn't rain in the theatre. Some rice was thrown, but no more rolls of toilet paper on slices of toast. But faithful Rocky Horror fans still acted out the scenes in front of the stage. A hardcore group had a retort for every line and situation in the movie.

When Dr. Frank N. Furter started swimming in a pool, one hardcore fan in the front yelled,

"Hey waiter, there's a transvestite in my soup!"

The hardcore fans up front kept the excitement going. Most of the audience seemed content to sit back and be entertained by these weekend/midnight actors. When the time came for everyone to get up out of their seats and do the Time Warp, most of the audience stayed in the cushy seats.

I was disappointed in the lack of audience participation. But by the end of the film, I had a new appreciation for the film itself. When I was younger, I thought it was just a bad flick made better by throwing things at opportune times, but now I can appreciate what writer Richard O'Brien was trying to spoof. The musical numbers are catchy and the lyrics are clever. What I thought was just plain bad acting, I now see as contrived campiness.

I might go back to see "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" soon. And with cold weather arriving, it's all the easier to hide squirt guns, toilet paper and toast in a bulky winter coat.

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