

the horror, the horror

Virgin 'Rocky Horror' actors drawn to roles

BY KEN MORTON

Karen Friemund Wills had never seen any version of "The Rocky Horror Show" before Friday night.

The significance of her being a "Rocky Horror" "virgin" lies in the fact that she is playing the lead female role, Janet, in the Lincoln Community Playhouse's stage presentation of "The Rocky Horror Show."

Despite the fact that she had never seen the screen or stage version, Wills, a Playhouse veteran, was drawn to the role because of the craziness that surrounds "Rocky Horror."

Performance Preview

The Rocky Horror Show

Where: Lincoln Community Playhouse
2500 S. 56th St.

When: August 24-27
8 p.m., Friday and Saturday
additional showing @ 10:30 p.m.

Cost: \$12

She said she was delighted with the reception the play received when it opened last weekend.

She hopes to carry that momentum into the next set of shows on Aug. 24-27.

The shows start at 8 p.m. each night with additional 10:30 p.m. showings on Friday and Saturday.

The later audiences last weekend were a bit more interactive, which made the shows especially fun, Wills said.

Wills also said her - and other cast members' - lack of knowledge with the script made the performance more challenging.

"Sometimes, it got to a point where the audience's comebacks and participation threw us off so much that we wanted to break script," Wills said.

The play's director, Paul Pearson, said he welcomed having key cast members who had little or no knowledge of the film version of "Rocky Horror."

Horror."

The cast had a wonderful mix of "Rocky" fans, actors whom he had directed in the past and Playhouse regulars, Pearson said.

"It kept the play from turning into the movie," he said. Pearson was emphatic that the film version ("The Rocky Horror Picture Show") and the stage version ("The Rocky Horror Show") be seen as two different types of productions.

"The theater production has this great interaction between performers and audience that you don't get with the movie," he said. "With the theater version, you get cast members shooting silly string at the audience."

Pearson said he found the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" almost boring. "Here you've got this lavish, theatrical movie that lacks the intimacy of the theater. If you want to see the true show, come and see the stage version," he said.

The comebacks and lines that are a big part of the movie, Pearson said, are also part of the live show. But, he added, even "Rocky Horror" movie veterans can have trouble keeping up with the stage version.

"The live version moves so much quicker," he said.

"Most people get so caught up in the performance that they forget to say anything."

Pearson also limited the number of props audience members could bring into the theater - something Wills said the cast was grateful for.

"We've got cast members on 5-inch stiletto heels," Wills said. "The last thing we need is rice thrown all over the stage."



Delan Lenowski/DN

Fantastical eye candy makes 'Cell' worthwhile

BY SAMUEL MCKEWIN

A year from now, the college rooms of film buffs will be adorned with posters from "The Cell," a poster movie if there ever was one.

There's scene after scene of alluring, awe-inspiring visuals cataloging the perverse inner sanctums of a serial killer and his psychiatrist (Jennifer Lopez) - a real feast for the eyes, the kind of photography and production design that suggests how Luis Bunuel might have made film in the early 21st Century.

It's the vision of first-time director Tarsem, who developed his signature in the 1989 R.E.M. music video "Losing My Religion." Tarsem uses that style then mixes in steals from surrealism, from Salvador Dali, to film predecessors like "What Dreams May Come."

I like the result - a vibrant, abrupt, optically challenging map of mortal thoughts.

One scene has a character watch a boy ascend newly formed castle stairs only feet away, then realize she's miles away.

Another character finds himself on a beach accompanied by three whispering porcelain dolls of identical, back-bending poses, as the beach curls up beneath them into sandy folds.

In another, there is a giant log, a stallion and a little boy with eels for hands. Eels swim in the closet during another scene.

You don't get the picture - which is the point. And you can't until you see it firsthand.

Not quite as intriguing is the story, which melds together science fiction - the ability for a child counselor (Lopez) to enter the mind of comatose patients by virtue of a billionaire-funded project - and elements of the horror/serial killer genre.

It all eventually morphs into a race-against-the-clock drama about a long-haired damsel in severe distress, trapped in a water cube that slowly fills until it drowns the captive.

This contraption is the invention of Carl Stargher (Vincent D'Onofrio), who's two shades stranger than Hannibal Lecter, especially in the sexual fetish department. Stargher will be caught 30 minutes into the film through his own foolish error.

We get the sense he wanted to be, as does an FBI agent (Vince Vaughn)

embroiled in the case. But Stargher falls into a irreversible coma related to a rare schizophrenia called Waylon's Infraction.

The remaining victim yet unfound, Vaughn's character, looking like he came off a three-day bender, calls upon Catherine Deane (Lopez) and her scientists. The idea is to enter Stargher's mind, make contact with the inner child and get the goods. There's no spilling secrets in saying Lopez gets much more than that.

The remainder of "The Cell" is largely spent in one mind or another, and the scenes are best left discovered in the theater.

I found Deane's initial foray into Stargher's mind, involving a horse, a body builder, little boys and an idealized, king-like version of Stargher's self, as the most compelling.

The second looks a good deal like the R.E.M. video, while a medieval disemboweling under the watchful eye of a concubine highlights another head trip.

The mindscape sequences are intercut, as they must be, by the slowly filling water cube where the final victim waits and cries in the desert underground.

Strangely, these scenes, along with the setup involving a still-alive Stargher, achieve their chilling effect more easily than the fantasy interludes. "The Cell" continually reminds us that nothing is real. I accept that.

Things die a bit in the final 20 minutes, as the movie rushes headlong toward a predictable conclusion. Lopez's character takes a big risk, and there's a showdown that turns into a letdown, in both

visual and story terms.

One line in the movie - a cheap salvo that belongs in a Stallone flick - mars the end with a big thud.

But "The Cell" survives because it is ambitious and tough at the same time, as it doesn't overindulge in its eye candy and remembers that its core is thriller-based, and the question of the girl must be solved.

There is enough police procedural to lend the head trips some weight, rather than float unattached, as they did in "What Dreams May Come."

The performances follow suit. Though Lopez won't make anyone forget Jodie Foster, she does exactly what she was hired to do - be easy on the libido; along with her purr and whisper, she shows off a low-cut feathery wedding dress and a S/M leather getup. Vaughn grumbles and smolders, while D'Onofrio adds to his resume of playing genuine oddballs.

But the real stars are the production team Tarsem, who lays it on a bit thick (Slow-motion helicopters are a real snooze.) but mostly keeps a steady hand, especially in the water cube sequences. "The Cell" takes small liberty with the truth - just how one embed hooks into their own back is beyond me - but we forgive because the fantasy is worth it.

In reality, many critics couldn't forgive, railing the movie for its pretentiousness, its bloated self-importance, its gruesome depiction of medieval torture, among other things. Pretentious, self-important, gruesome: "The Cell" is all of that, and more.

Name me one ambitious film that isn't. My advice: See "The Cell," like it, then buy the poster. I'm betting there'll be at least 20 to choose from.

MOVIE REVIEW

The Cell

Director: Tarsem

Rating: R (fantastic representation of disemboweling, severe animal cruelty, child abuse, serial murder)

Stars: Jennifer Lopez, Vince Vaughn, Vincent D'Onofrio

★★★ of 4 stars



COURTESY PHOTO

Susan Barnes, Julia Noyes and Janna Harsch model some of the hats that will be modeled tonight at a Noyes Art Gallery opening.

Hat party opens Noyes exhibit

BY MELANIE MENSCH

Gallery Preview

Hat Party Art Gallery

Where: Noyes Art Gallery, 119 S. 9th St.

When: August 22
7-9 p.m.

Cost: Free

Mama always said it's rude to wear your hat indoors, but tonight break out the sombreros and fedoras and tip your caps to some of Lincoln's artists.

The Noyes Art Gallery, 119 S. 9th St., is throwing a "hat party" from 7-9 p.m. tonight, during which several gallery artists will showcase their work and techniques.

"I just finished teaching a workshop on making hats last week," said Julia Noyes, owner of the gallery. "We had a lot of fun with it and decided to add it to the show."

Visitors are encouraged to wear hats of all styles during the artists' demonstrations, and if you don't have one, "you can always borrow one," Noyes said, pointing to a variety of her hats on display.

The gallery, open since 1993, prides itself on the variety and individuality of its artists. As a co-op, the gallery has about 25 members, allowing artists to encourage and inspire each other.

Artists will show their work in areas such as black and white photography, mask making, ink drawing and jewelry design, giving patrons the opportunity to

meet the people behind the art.

Janna Harsch, a mixed media artist, will demonstrate colored pencil techniques and showcase her award-winning art in the focus gallery.

"Horses are my particular obsession," she said. "But whether it's a horse or a person or a seashell, my paintings are about motion and change."

The Noyes Art Gallery usually showcases a new artist the first Friday of each month but wanted to do things a bit differently this month, Noyes said.

"We've never done this before, and it's good for people to see the art and meet the artists."



Shawn Ballarin/DN