

# Current running comedies

## Dreams, reality contrasted

By ED LEITCH  
DTH Staff Writer

From joyful dance routines, songs expressing "pie-in-the-sky" optimism and sets designed from the Depression-era paintings of Edward Hopper, *Pennies from Heaven* takes a step into the harsh world of 1930s Depression America. This is a world where only dreams are cheap, and reality is a nightmare which must ultimately be reckoned with.

### review

*Pennies From Heaven*, perhaps the most daring film of 1981, is a cinematic clash of idealism versus reality. They are contrasted throughout the movie like two sides of a cloud — one bathing in the golden light of the sun, one pouring out rain over shattered dreams.

Steve Martin plays sheet-music salesman Arthur Parker, whose reckless idealism (and wife's money) allow him to drift temporarily in a romantic dream world. Bernadette Peters plays Eileen Everson, a virgin schoolteacher-turned-prostitute, who can attribute her new lifestyle entirely to meeting Arthur.

While Peters is well cast in the role of Eileen and switches from innocence to naughty in the blink of an eye, Steve Martin was tailor-made for the role of Arthur. Arthur's egotistical, self-centered attitude is nearly as abrasive as the arrow-through-the-head, "Well excuse me" idiot that Martin made famous on his comedy albums.

In fact, when Eileen is recounting her life since Arthur dumped her (holding a slip of paper with his phony address written on it, no less), all he can come up with to say in his defense is "That's right — blame me!" If he had blurted out "Excuse me" it would have fit just as well.

The lip-synched vocals on the musical numbers take some getting used to. When you've just about accepted Steve Martin in his first serious dramatic role, he breaks into song in the unquestionably female voice of Connie Boswell crooning "I'll Never Have To Dream Again." A sneaking suspicion sets in that you've just laid out four bucks to see a remake of *The Jerk*.

Luckily, this suspicion is relatively short-lived, and the transitions from reality to dream become more fluid as



Jessica Harper, Bernadette Peters and Steve Martin perform ... in "Pennies from Heaven"

*Pennies* tap-dances on to its happy-sad conclusion.

The big production numbers like "Yes, Yes! (My Baby Said Yes)," or Bernadette Peters boop-boop-ee-dooping her way through Helen Kane's "I Want To Be

Bad" make *Pennies From Heaven* an enjoyable picture well worth seeing. But don't expect to leave the theater identifying with a new American hero. There are no truly likable characters in *Pennies*, but apparently that's the idea. Dreams are fine, but real life is a pain in the neck.

## Chevy Chase lacks humor in 'Modern Problems'

By TIM MOONEY  
DTH Staff Writer

The *Modern Problems* promotional slogan says of its star Chevy Chase: "Chevy has the power to make this holiday season the funniest yet." If comedy was his intention, Chevy suffered the biggest power failure of the Christmas season.

This is unfortunate for the film's producers because, in my opinion, a smash comedy would have done great at the box office. Only one other comedy, *Neighbors*, was released to offset the plethora of serious-natured films such as *Reds*, *Ragtime*, *Rollover*, etc.

In *Modern Problems*, Chevy stars as Max, an air traffic controller who is unhappily preoccupied with the rocky relationship he and his girl friend Darcy (Patti D'Arbanville) are undergoing. Max's problem is a severe lack of self-confidence coupled with a bad case of

negative thinking, and this provokes his troubles with Darcy. As his ex-wife Lorraine (Mary Kay Place) analyzes, "Max is a prince who thinks he's a frog."

One day Max is driving home when a truck carrying nuclear waste dumps a shower of the debris on him and, voila, he inherits telekinetic powers. However, the writers fail to take advantage of this potential for comedy. *Modern Problems* is trapped in an identity crisis. The film makers couldn't decide whether to make this movie a comedy or romantic drama, so they settled for a disturbingly awkward combination of the two.

The reason *Modern Problems* fails in the romantic aspect is because you just don't give a damn about either Max or Darcy. For once, Chevy Chase is an unbearable bore throughout the film. His self-pitying, moody character is particularly annoying, totally unlike the delightful cop he played in *Foul Play*.

Even though it is easy to like Patti D'Arbanville, her

equally low-spirited, tedious role makes this a difficult task. And when the two are together, their struggling relationship is so difficult to sympathize with that the viewer only grows angered by the futile situation.

Is it enough to say *Modern Problems* isn't funny because, simply, nothing funny happens in it? There are only two, possibly three, funny scenes in the film, none of which go beyond simple slapstick. For example, a jealous Max uses his powers to give Darcy's date a gushing nosebleed in a ritzy restaurant. Later, drawing upon a "Little Rascals"-type effect, Max sends a ballet dancer literally flying during a recital.

And it is only at these few times, when Chevy takes advantage of his powers and forgets his stupid girl friend, that he evokes our compassion. What the screenwriters were possibly trying to do with the other ninety minutes of *Modern Problems* was beyond me — and the rest of the slumbering audience.

## Campus Calendar

Public service announcements must be turned into the box outside DTH offices in the Carolina Union by noon if they are to run the next day. Each item will be run at least twice.

### CAMPUS CALENDAR

The Black Interdenominational Student Association praise service and meeting will be held at 7:15 p.m. at the Union.

### COMING EVENTS

Nihongo O. Hanao Kai meets again 12-130 p.m. every Thursday starting tomorrow in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge in the Union. Come and join us whenever you feel like enjoying a friendly conversation in Japanese. Anyone is welcome, and some Japanese students will be with us.

CHEC (Contraceptive Health Education Clinic), is meeting at 3:30 p.m. Thursday in the Frank Porter Graham Lounge of the Union. CHEC is geared to help UNC students to be responsible partners in matters concerning sexuality. CHEC provides an informative, informal discussion and slide presentation of contraception.

"Carolina Wetlands—Nature and Threats," a slide show and talk by Derb Carter of the National Wildlife Federation, will be presented at 8 p.m. Thursday in the Dreyfus Audi-

torium, Research Triangle Institute, Cornwallis Rd., RTP. The presentation is being sponsored by the Sierra Club.

A lecture titled "Formation of New Bonds to Carbon Using Organotransition Metal Complexes" by Dr. Robert G. Bergman at the University of California at Berkeley, will be presented at 8 p.m. Thursday in 207 Venable Hall.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Chapter of the Episcopal Diocese of the Carolinas will observe the Friday-night observance of King's birthday at the Great Hall of the Union.

The Black Interdenominational Student Association (BISA) will sponsor rides to First Baptist Church on Sundays. Cars will be leaving the Union at 10:50 a.m. and Chase Hall at 10:40 a.m.

Attention 1982 Senior Class Committee: First meeting of the semester will be at 7 p.m. Sunday in 215 Union. Bring yourself, ideas, munchies. All seniors are welcome. Get psyched—we graduate in May.

The UNC Crew Club will hold an organizational meeting at 7 p.m. Monday in 224 Union. A film will be shown of Championship rowing, and new members are welcome. An informational meeting on a six-week University

credited Summer Program in Quebec Canada will be held at 4 p.m. Tuesday in Toy Lounge, fourth floor of Dey Hall.

### ITEMS OF INTEREST

The New Performing Dance Company starts its winter-spring season of dance classes on Monday, Jan. 25. Classes are held during the day for the non-working dance student or the student on shifts and in the evenings and on Saturdays. For more information, a complete brochure and for registration, please call 688-1138.

Student Health Service is offering a three-week brown bag luncheon "Freedom From Smoking Clinic" emphasizing positive lifestyle behaviors in a supportive group setting. Enrollment is limited to UNC students. This group will meet Jan. 26, Feb. 2, Feb. 3, Feb. 4, and Feb. 9 from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m. For registration (mandatory) call 966-2281, ext. 275 before Friday, Jan. 22.

There is an alternative APO Book Co-op now in operation collecting Jan. 13 until 4 p.m. and selling through the Union from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Attention UNC Students: Don't monkey around and miss your chance to volunteer at North Carolina Memorial Hospital. Returning volunteers may register at the Volunteers Office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. the week of Jan. 11-15. Registration will be open to all interested students the week of Jan. 18-22. The Volunteer Office is located on the first floor of the Old Clinic Building. Any questions, call 966-4793.

The Chapel Hill National Organization for Women will hold its January program meeting today at 7:30 p.m. in the Presbyterian Student Center on Henderson Street. NOW will present the film "Rape Culture," a unique and shocking look at the phenomenon of rape in our society. A discussion of the film will follow. For more information call Jan. Allen at 929-6274.

St. Joseph's Performance Center in Durham is offering again a course on "How to Start a Small Business." The course begins Monday at 7 p.m. For more information or to sign up, call now at 688-5407.

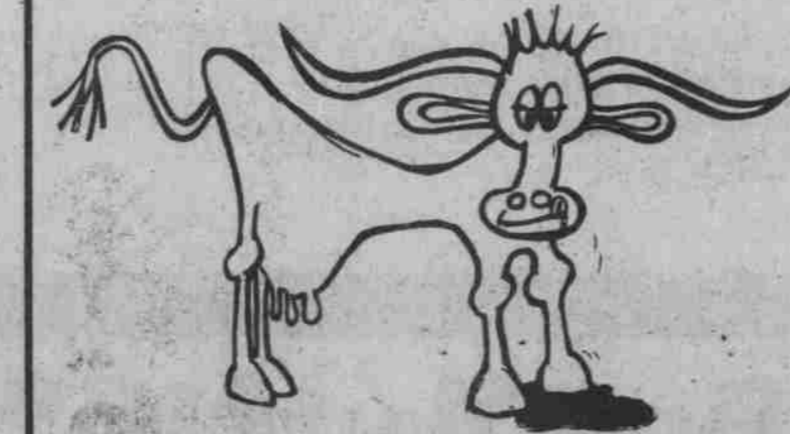
The Chef Hangers will be accepting for one hour and one hour soon. Check DTH for time and place or call Miles at 929-8063 for more information.

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## 'Neighbors' innovative

By DENNIS GOSS  
DTH Staff Writer

*Neighbors*, the latest product of the Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi acting team, is a dark, comic look at suburban life. The film is daring and innovative, and provides the perfect showcase for Aykroyd and Belushi to flaunt their talent.

Belushi portrays Earl Keese, a conservative, middle-class homeowner complete with humdrum lifestyle. But Vic (Dan Aykroyd) and Ramona (Cathy Moriarty) move in next door and immediately turn Earl's life upside down. They epitomize the gaudy, inconsiderate and forward neighbors that anyone would have nightmares about.

After an aggressive introduction, Earl is in for two days of nonstop irrational and bizarre situations. Vic and Ramona are practical jokers, and Earl is always their victim. Ramona repeatedly makes advances towards Earl, but always turns cold; she simultaneously entices and repels him. And Vic wants to be buddies, but Earl is reluctant, believing Vic and Ramona are raving lunatics. As a result, Earl is forced by his new neighbors to live their lifestyle.

One particularly good sequence parodies horror films as Belushi and Aykroyd venture into a swamp and later surprise one another, covered with muck, in Earl's basement. And the scenes of Ramona and Earl as she beckons him to prove his manhood are priceless. *Neighbors* is spotted with such hilarious, well-written scenes. Despite an unpredictable start, the film gradually shapes these scenes into a pattern that makes sense.

But the bright spot in *Neighbors* is Dan Aykroyd's portrayal of Vic. Vic's bleached hair and tacky outfits hint at his artificial, carefree character. Aykroyd makes Vic loveable, and he gets all the laughs. For example, when Vic first meets Earl he says, "It's a great house." Earl replies, "Thank you." "I mean mine," Vic snaps. The film could easily have played it safe and cast Belushi as the funny man as in previous films. But in a daring flip-flop, Aykroyd is the funny guy. *Neighbors* is the ideal playground for Aykroyd's antics, and as Vic he is outstanding.

Cathy Moriarty, who received an Academy Award nomination for her first

film *Raging Bull*, is the perfect vamp. Her soft and sexy voice and her facial expressions are enough to melt Earl. And Moriarty works well as Vic's playmate.

*Neighbors* is fun because of the effect Vic and Ramona have on Earl and his wife. At first Earl resents their presence. But because Vic sets the pace, Earl cannot help but have a good time. Despite his repulsiveness, Vic is an intriguing, loveable person. Earl feels this, and eventually doesn't want to see him go. A new lifestyle has been forced on Earl, and he likes it.

*Neighbors* overcomes its seemingly aimless start and provides some hearty laughs. The film departs from the previous Belushi-Aykroyd formula, and does so with great success. *Neighbors*, because of the talent of Aykroyd and Belushi, is outstanding.

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