

## Document Citation

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Sleeper: Dir. Woody Allen.

Woody Allen is a difficult actor to like in the way that one likes Robert Redford or Vanessa Redgrave. Then, again he is a different sort of actor, but it is also difficult to like him in the way one likes Chaplin or Keaton. The Marx Brothers are pretty repulsive, but then Harpo had charm, Groucho had panache, Chico had a hat and all that plus their antics and script gave delight. Woody Allen I have never liked, but I would never miss one of his movies. One admires his work, one enjoys his movies and that is enough. Sleeper is even and it lacks the slow parts his other movies always had. Allen sets his comedy in the future—two hundred years hence. This allows him to play on recent events. As a director he uses the simplest devices that tell. When he is being defrosted and the ponderous medical assistants roll back the tin foil, the association of tin foil with food and the hungry look of the doctor and the nurse fuse, in the subconscious, to produce a sort of substratum hysteria. As with most comedies, when people get together to talk about such a film each relishes the details that appealed to them most. Diane Keaton is Allen's leading lady and although she has an unexplained appeal (perhaps I feel sorry for her) she still lacks the qualities that would put her in the traditional position that is occupied by "another" in comedy films. She is for instance not a Margaret Dumont (When are they going to erect a statue to her?) One wishes that she could produce a completely satisfactory performance. I don't think it is a fault. It might be that she, like Allen, is refining and

clearing her performance. Certainly after seeing the film the viewer is clearer about what Allen is trying to say about the world. Even his face is clearer and the cinematography has a clarity that reveals the simple sets of a severe future. The waiter robots are a masterpiece. The image recalls Harold Lloyd's face. The traditional waiter's black and white tail suit, a must in many early comedies, makes the viewer anticipate comic situations. Allen has paid so much tribute to the past and yet devised these items as logical ingredients of the present-future situation that he depicts. He also contrives to make the robots appear far more human than the human beings they attempt to serve. It may be, as it has already been dubbed, a classic, but I hope Allen will one day attempt a silent comedy. That may be his classic.