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A CROSS BETWEEN "FANTASIA" AND "YELLOW SUBMARINE" WITH A TOUCH OF FELLINI



'Allegro' much more than a spoof

Mel Brooks spoofed "Frankenstein," Gene Wilder spoofed "Sherlock Holmes" and Marty Feldman spoofed "Beau Geste;" all of them were takeoffs on the style of classic films made frequently during the '30s and '40s. During that era, one of the most stylish and classic filmmakers was Walt Disney, and one of the most inventive of his films was "Fantasia". It was only a matter of time before somebody got around to spoofing Disney and this classic; the reason it took so long, though, is that in order to pull it off it required someone whose talent was at least equal to that of Disney. That man is Bruno Bozzetto, and the film is called "ALLEGRO NON TROPPO".

It's a fabulously creative and entertaining film, the kind Disney might have made if he'd gone to the "Mad Magazine" Christmas party and got inspired—not to mention stoned. A live actor welcomes us to an empty concert hall where he introduces us to the orchestra leader, who looks like a mean Oliver Hardy, to the cartoonist, who looks like Ben Turpin after a successful eye operation, and to the orchestra—which consists only of women whose average age is deceased. Between animated color sequences, Bozzetto cuts back to this delightfully shabby group in black and white while it tries to get its act together.

There are a half-dozen animated musical sequences, and you wish there were more. Some of them are possessed of vigor and vision and even genius; in fact, one of them is a classic in itself and worth the whole film: At the beginning of Time we see a tiny, bubbly life form emerge from a Coke bottle; to the hypnotic beat of Ravel's "Bolero," that life form marches forward, multiplies and evolves from dinosaur to ape-like man. When the evolution is over, the audience bursts into spontaneous and deserved applause. There is also a charming short piece about a bee who can't eat because a couple of human lovers keep rolling over on her, and there's a very touching sequence about a cat living in a condemned building. In spite of the wrecking crew, he stays there because he keeps seeing the spirits of the family he used to live with. This scene has more heart than Dr. DeBaakey sees in a year.

"ALLEGRO NON TROPPO" means fast but not too fast—well, it's the fastest 90 minutes I've lived through in months. If you want to spend a rewarding evening, get to a theatre fast!

— John Barbour, L.A. Magazine, Sept. 1977

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