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The 1960's Revisited

Big Cartoon Films Back

The full length animated feature, which fell on the hardest of hard times during the 1960s, seems to be in the midst of a rather dramatic comeback.

In recent weeks, Seattle audiences have been treated to such stylistically diverse cartoon fare as "Raggedy Ann and Andy," Ralph Bakshi's "Wizards," a phenomenally successful re-release of Disney's "Fantasia," and currently "Run For Your Life, Charlie Brown" and "The Rescuers," again from Disney — all highly imaginative, very different full length features and all doing surprisingly well at the box office.

The latest addition to this renaissance and, in many ways the most interesting, is an Italian-made, mostly animated spectacular called "Allegro Non Troppo," which has just been picked up for U.S. distribution by Seattle-based Specialty Films and opened yesterday at the Guild 45th.

"Allegro" purports to be a parody of "Fantasia" — some six different animated segments set to classical music with a series of humorous nonanimated interludes — and it is the result of three years of work by the noted Italian animator Bruno Bozzetto and a team of artists employing a grab bag of original and unusual techniques.

Bozzetto's parody, of course, can't even begin to touch the grandeur of its model: the musical and animation sequences are not nearly as well coordinated and the colors seem dull and flat against the richness of the early '40s Disney technicolor process. And yet, it still manages to be a marvelous experience in its own right — a wild, colorful burlesque sketch of a movie held together by a Fellini-like orchestra of old women and a conductor who could pass for one of the Three Stooges.

The best of the segments themselves sparkle with their own particular brilliance. Debussy's "Afternoon of a Faun" becomes the story of an

aging satyr who can't find a sexual partner, a funny-sad little essay on the pathos of sexual longing, bathed in erotic imagery and torrid tones of pink. Ravel's "Bolero" becomes Bozzetto's version of the evolution of life, a driving progression in which ooze from a coke bottle evolves into a long line of r. Seuss monsters and R. Crumb creatures that eventually engulfs the earth.

Best of all is Sibelius' "Valse Triste," a poignant little vignette in which an alley cat living in the ruin of a city building and longing for the comfort of a home and master, imagines a series of domestic scenes which flash before him in a nonanimated form.

It is in mixing the two forms, in fact, — animated and live action — that Bozzetto is at his most skillful. Since the day that Jerry the Mouse danced with Gene Kelly in MGM's "Anchors Aweigh," animators have been very reluctant to try their hand at this difficult technique but Bozzetto manages to carry it off throughout his film.

In short, "Allegro" is not Disney but in its own way it is almost as good, and all those people who were lining up to see "Fantasia" a few weeks ago should love it.