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## FILM

### Tanner '88

Let's face it: We've got a big-time leadership crisis. We're in the midst of a depression, everybody's still jittery from the Los Angeles riots and George Bush diligently continues to widen the gap between rich and poor. Bill Clinton, meanwhile, has been invisible, resting his vocal cords and pondering how to convince voters that he's more than an overambitious lecher. What's behind Door Number Three? Ross Perot, an enigma with a Platinum Card and the blind trust of a quarter of the population. Apparently nobody



remembers *It Can't Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis' tale of an American dictator emerging from economic chaos.

Who do I propose, you ask? None other than Jack Quentin Tanner, the fictional presidential candidate brought to life by Garry Trudeau ("Doonesbury") and Robert Altman (*Nashville*) in a brilliant six-hour 1988 HBO series. This fierce satire of politics, culture and America the Beautiful follows Tanner (Michael Murphy of *Manhattan* and *The Front*) as he campaigns in the '88 primaries. *Tanner '88* features the likes of Kitty Dukakis and Robert Dole meeting Smilin' Jack in a cockeyed universe that foreshadows the dozens of movie star cameos in Altman's *The Player*. While the gossamer thin line between fiction and the absurd reality of American politics has never been so devastatingly explored, the system somehow shrugged off the criticism. God knows we need a reminder, but since neither HBO nor anyone else has seen fit to fund *Tanner '92*, we must content ourselves with the first campaign. "Dark Horse" (the pilot) and episodes 1-4 of *Tanner '88* screen at the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley on July 9 and 23, with episodes 5-10 shown on July 16 and 30; (510) 642-1412. (Michael Fox)