move...

Firemen is short on ideas

By Robert Fourier

A couple of years ago, Mike Forman made a film called "The Lives of a Blonds," which, while not a comedy, has a number of funny scenes. One, towards the start, involves three middle-aged women trying to meet three young guys at a big affair in a Czechoslovakian town during the last war. Forman's latest film, "The Firemen's Ball," is little more than an extension and continuation of this one scene from the men's point of view; so it remains a farce, and, not surprisingly, a somewhat limited one.

It is not a very ordinary one, however. Generally, a farce is distinguished by the audience's lack of concern for the characters: whatever happens, it's intended only to laugh. Most often, the facial situations are highly unrealistic, so the characters just aren't identified with real people. Forman's characters do seem real, however - only they're all much different types. One has no sympathy for them, not because they're just the sort of people one has no sympathy for. The result is a really black face - very funny, but at the same time very unhappy. At the beginning, it is also very good. The unexpected pro stupidities of the characters, presented with some clever dialogue and camerawork, are almost constantly hilarious. But where the situation takes still another turn in "Loves of a Blonds," here it remains much the same; and soon the unexpectedness wears off. For at least the last half of the film, almost every joke is predictable, or at least entirely unsurprising. If the intent was to show something dizzyingly funny, it has certainly been realized. Still, though, there is a limit to how much people can take of this without something to balance it.

As for aspects of craft - acting, writing, photography, directing - this is probably the better of the two films. But it creates nothing new; Forman presents no fresh ideas, and instead repeats just a few of his old ones. While he certainly does have a right to be concerned on what he chooses, one still hopes he will reverse the trend.

Controlled flash guitar in Hendrix Experience

By Bill Serovy

A crowd reported to exceed 20,000 saw the Jimi Hendrix show Saturday at the Boston Garden. It was a little bit of both concert and Experience, and a good example of each. Hendrix is probably the world's most creative artist on the electric guitar, in that he produces more varied sounds from his instrument than any other above ground. This was incontroversibly established by the concert portion of the show. Hendrix lets his guitar perform under his guidance, and it goes wild at times. But one always feels confident that he has complete control, something missing from others in the field, such as Jeff Beck and Janis Joplin. It is probably the world's best electric guitarist.

Hendrix's concert experience is a blend of concert segments with a number of features that are not concert. It depends on what he pleases, one can take of this without sympathy for them, not because they seem real, however - only they're all somewhat limited one. Still, though, there is a limit to how much people can take of this without something to balance it.

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