Rick Moranis enters the land of Oz in "Little Shop of Horrors"

FRANK OZ AND RICK MORANIS
An interview, Nov. 24.

By JULIAN WEST

Rick Moranis describes his first starring role, in the recently released film of "Little Shop of Horrors," as something he had always wanted to do. Frank Oz looks at directing as a fresh challenge, and a chance to do more serious work.

But the two are more happy talking about each other. More than just a mutual admiration society, they became good friends during the year spent filming at Pinewood studios near London.

"Moranis, best known from his work with the Second City comedy troupe, describes the typical daily schedule during the shoot. "We'd show up at 6:30 or 9, and have tea for two hours." After a take or two, "everyone drinks their lunch and we'd go home." Moranis had to keep him from demanding human beings, despite the success of "Heartbreak Hotel." He said it was like "light hitting harder than I was.""

It is partly the ease which Oz brings to the director's chair which prompts Moranis to proclaim that Oz is "a major director." He says it with confidence, although he is champions a puppeteer.

"He would have been chastised for unprofessional behavior by another director," he admits, "but the only punishment was when I would have had to reshoot a scene. Oz (center) plans a day's schedule by saying, "When you are dealing with human beings, which I tend to enjoy more than anything, it's a different sensation."

"Little Shop of Horrors" makes the transition well. It is partly the ease which Oz brings to the director's chair which prompts Moranis to proclaim that Oz is "a major director."

Frank Oz (center) talks to the costars of "Little Shop of Horrors"

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"Little Shop" blossoms into a movie

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James Belushi and John Candy get a scene to call their own. They make the most of it, particularly Candy, who plays a radio deejay. Moranis says, "Better than any of the characters involved in the plot, however, is the trio of downtown singers who play the role of Integral characters in the story. New York City teenagers play the threepiece, bearing the unlikely names of Crystal, Chiffon, and Roxy, and are the only characters with any wisdom. They share a symbiotic relationship on the level of the nervous system. The plot is not really one of the high points of the movie. Some of the songs, such as "Downtown," are.

Well, okay, it's a good movie. But what can be done to stop this story? It has already become a comic book. Perhaps Saturday cartoons are next. Or heaven forbid — a TV miniseries.