Gas

A calculator embedded in its belly, a dead stuffed beaver ornaments an executive desk in Gas. Intended as a joke, the film seems solenoided legislation's, but it unwittingly provides a most telling image. If Gas is an example of a Canadian movie, the beaver probably died of aneurysm when he read the script. Given the crass intentions of the filmmakers (who, as the movie moves, are obviously not as easily embarrassed as the viewers in the corrupt in such a practical manner—anything for a laugh. The juxtaposition of the two—our national symbol and the image of commerce—makes a perfect comment on this sorry product from our film industry. And just as this shot mimics a joke when examined, it does. To call it a travesty of comedy would be a compliment. Despite all efforts (and some strove mightily, especially the stunt drivers and special effects people), Gas is painful, a mess of miscalculations about the nature of mayhem comedy.

That there is a thin line in Gas concerns the stockpiling of gasoline by the mega-lomaniac oil tycoon Duke Stuyvesant (earlier models. That the similarities are obviously that the movie is influenced by amusing.

Genuinely sick. Ed is mentally ill, not decision at the gas station and the spectator demolition of the restaurant, the explosion of the gas, and the spectacles, the Mafia nephews deal­ ing with broken waterpipes, lurk the quarrlesome comedy teams of Martin and Lewis, Abbott and Costello, and Laurel and Hardy, all inept and constantly on the verge of being blown to bits or washed away. What Gas could have been is a celebration of its ancestors. But it is not.

Essentially, Gas misuses its comic material. When Ed descends to slobber­ ing over his sister, he can no longer effectively play his part as the wrong­ headed guardian of family virtue who sets off devastating chain reactions for what are seen as the right reasons. Quite noticably, too, Gas, like the Marx brothers' moview, is conceived around "big scenes of controlled mayhem. But unlike its ancestors, Gas does not exist to build up to them. Groucho gets off one good line after another; Gas contains a single, solenomery memorable line. The pairs here are ineffectual for several reasons: they don't engage in comic banter, usually based on semantic misunderstanding, but simply make a lot of tedious noise. Furthermore, since each one is almost indistinguishable from his mate (even physically), the smart­ stupid routines that form the foundation for the comedy of the earlier teams cannot even exist. Imitation, as well as being the sincerest form of flattery, is also a dangerous game to play. By inviting comparison, Gas shows how far short of its model it falls.

Finally, comedy usually, almost for­ mally, mates with justice and the end. The vicious, in this case the aversive and corrupt, should stand revealed, stripped of their pretensions and humbled, at least for the present. But in Gas, with Duke believing the fuel seeped into the ground and the others just standing around, none of the lines of the plot are tied off. The unresolved problems pre­ sumably just evaporate—like gas. The only good jokes in this movie are on its title.

Anna Carlssott

Gas

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Ron Mann's

Imagine the Sound

Imagine the Sound is less a film than it is an art exposition brought to the screen. More specifically, the music of jazz musicians Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon, Archie Shepp and Paul Bley. To recapture some of the experience and the music which they create and perform in the film, it is important to consider the historical context from which their sound has emerged. The adventures of the avant­ garde in the finales of late­forties/early­fifties jazz music ('Bebop') and the 'Cool Jazz' of the late fifties and early sixties, spawned a new breed of musicians which sought the purity of sound itself. The unforeseen hope of every artist is that his work imitates, and thereby becomes life. Cecil Taylor expresses this desire in the opening scene of the