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Twisted Flicks at ACT – Review

June 6, 4:25 PM - Seattle Fine Arts Examiner - Steve Clare

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Twisted Flicks at ACT – Review

The Central Heating Lab at ACT presents three unique improv shows by Seattle's famed masters of improv, Wing-It Productions. These shows are designed as a companion piece to ACT's mainstage production of *Below the Belt: This Improvised Life* (May 29), *Twisted Flicks* (June 5), and *Improsia* (June 12). I attended *Twisted Flicks* last night.

Twisted Flicks is billed as "America's first fully improvised movie show." A classic cheesy B-grade quality film (or worse) is shown without its original soundtrack. All dialogue, sound effects, and music are improvised, based on suggestions from the audience, by a crack team of more than a half-dozen professional improvisors.

Last night's selection was "El Baron de Terror" aka "The Brainiac," a 1961 Mexican stinkbomb that is so bad it's good. The film is about a baron who is burned at the stake during the Spanish Inquisition (which he was not expecting) in 1661 and then returns via comet 300 years later, looking like a hairier, pointy-eared and fanged David Crosby who's suffering from a bout of elephantitis. His mission: wreak terror upon his inquisitor's descendants. Specifically, he hunts them down and sucks out their brains with a giant rubber forked tongue. After he feeds, he miraculously transforms back into the Baron, wearing the three-piece suit he "borrowed" from his first victim. The Baron also keeps a lovely bowl o' brains locked in a cabinet. From time to time he surreptitiously takes a few spoonfuls from the bowl as a between meal snack. Here's the spoiler: he gleefully practices his serial brainsucking right under the noses of Mexico City's finest until his love for the beautiful and blissful Vicki (another descendant) naturally leads to his demise--by flamethrower. Yes, flamethrower. (Oh, irony!)

Frankly, the movie itself is so ridiculous it's hilarious on its own, but add the music, sound effects, and dialogue from the Twisted Flicks improv team, and it becomes ROFL material. Thanks to the improvisors, the film's opening credits were accompanied by the song "Maniac," with improvised lyrics including of course the substitution of the word "Brainiac." The improvisers were dead on (no pun intended) in their ability to make up lines to match the action on the screen, and the music set the mood so well that I nearly forgot it was not the actual soundtrack. Near the end of the movie, the DVD began to malfunction, and they just went along with it, making the dialogue jerky to go along with the visual. The unexpected mishap could have stopped things cold but instead became another opportunity for humor: as the DVD was restarted and run forward, the performers continued to voiceover, with comments like "still dead" with respect to the corpses in the morgue.

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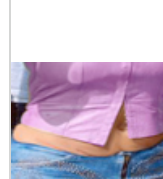
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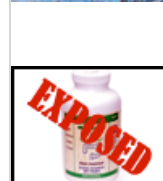
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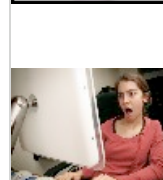
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I laughed so much that after the show my face and stomach literally hurt, and that's not a complaint.

Wing-It Productions, including Twisted Flicks, regularly performs at the University Theater. For more info go to <http://www.jetcityimprov.com/twistedflicks/>

The last of the three improv shows at the ACT, *Improsia*, is on June 12. For information and tickets, call ACT at (206) 292-7676, or go to <http://www.acttheatre.org>

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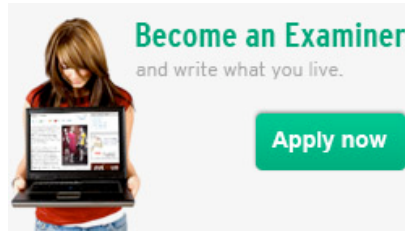
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