

# Phaggot Phliques presents The Queen

Call *Your Mother*, the AT&T ad suggests: **She Worries**. And well she might, supposing **The Queen** ever makes it to her neighborhood theatre. The Flawless Sabrina, for instance, ought to horrify her, transfix her with the shock of self-recognition — there was never a more truly **motherly** harridan of stage nor screen than the Flawless Sabrina. And if Harlow, on the other hand, won't make her feel outclassed and undersexed, then neither will Claire Bloom and Catherine Deneuve put together. **The Queen** will make everybody's mother worry, and then they'll all get together, no doubt, a whole great big herd of mothers, and try to get rid of it.

But what handle can they use for banning it, isn't it all about **men**? Maybe half a dozen chicks show up in it, all of them adequately clothed, and I give you my word, not so much as a curl of pubic hair appears throughout. Oh, there's a few dirty words here and there, but that's chic for Cinema '68, no future in complaining about that . . . But dammit, there's something **unhealthy** about this movie. Those are all homosexuals up there, aren't they? Well, homosexuals are **sick**! You shouldn't take advantage of sick people.

The poor dears, the assembled mothers will exclaim, they shouldn't be all filmed and everything like that, their shame and folly splashed across the screen in livid colour to be made mock of by the callow public. Faggots are supposed to be miserable, handicapped people; filming them in action, why, might as well wheel a strobe light into an epileptic's ward. "A gratuitous exploitation of sickness," they'll say, "a mockery of infirmity, an invasion of private agony" — thus will they, that great big herd of mothers, strive to remove this flick from the screen.

In fact, if you go up to Kips Bay to watch **The Queen** — the only place in the world that has it, for the moment — you might get the initial feeling that the mothers would be right. The whole movie is wondrously amusing, but there's something about the general audience reaction that moves one to wonder what precisely is so godawful funny, and why, anyway. Humour abounds, a half dozen outrageous sight gags every minute, and it frequently gets difficult to catch the dialogue over the laughter — the loud, long, raucous, almost exclusively **masculine** laughter.

It's not pleasant, that sort of laughter, not at all any expression of genuine amusement. It's a guffaw, a demonstrative, compulsive, superior kind of noise. When one of these guys catches for instance a Bette Davis poster on some queen's dressing room wall, he obliterates ten seconds of soundtrack with his howls of mirth. Now, he's not laughing at Bette Davis, not because she's funny herself — no, he's laughing at the dumb faggot for digging such as Bette Davis, for being the sort of creep who'd tack up a poster like that. Or when the Flawless Sabrina admonishes a roomful of queens not to go out cruising City hall, why, the air splits with laughter, the house fairly falls down from hilarity — but these guys aren't laughing at the preposterous idea of the City Hall steps draped with hustling queens in full drag, the Roman Spanish Stairs on a seedy opera night, no, these guys are laughing at the simple idea of cruising faggots. That's put-down laughter, "see-how-sophisticated-and-masculine-I-am" laughter.

Is this cruelty, exploitation? Well, one of the most significant lines in the flick occurs during a conversation between two queens sitting in a hotel room; they're talking about butch faggots who enjoy hurting women, out of jealousy, and one of the queens says, "I don't understand it — I have no prejudices, I have respect for anybody." At this point the hopsack-turtleneck contingent does a breathless doubletake, then reels off into gales of derisive laughter. There's something supremely asinine in that remark, something they can't quite put their finger on . . . And what it is, fellows, is your own asshole attitude come back to slap you silly.



BY DA LATIMER

The suggestion that a queen, a loathsome faggot, could have respect for people must appear supremely incongruous to a Hefner protege: These fellows at Kips Bay **have** to laugh at faggots, it's the only way they can abide the whole idea. To really **dig** homosexuals, hell, they'd have to accept the faggot in themselves first. And since they **have** to put up with faggots, faggots being in this season, they have to laugh. So they drag their chicks up to Kips Bay and howl all the way through the flick. Who's exploiting whom?

Aside from all this scruffy old morality shit, **The Queen** happens to be a stone gas. When the Miss All-America Beauty Pageant was held down at Town Hall in February of '67 (proceeds going to the Muscular Dystrophy fund, or some such worthy), Grove Press covered it with camera crew and sound gear. Following some weird litigation and a lot of excellent editing, they opened the flick at Kips Bay last week. Go there and see it, the quality of the film is superb for a documentary — full colour, very splashy indeed — and the sound is irreproachable, neither metallic nor fuzzy. A hand-held camera was used, and whoever held that camera knew exactly what he was about.

The people in **The Queen** are unforgettable. The Flawless Sabrina (Jack Doroshaw), the Pageant emcee who also narrates the film, is a promoter who organizes drag exhibitions all

across the country. He does a Jewish Mother **schtick** and does it splendidly — in drag, hair swept severely back, stylized reading glasses balanced across the tip of her nose, the Flawless Sabrina can terrorize an entire chorus line of queens into quivering immobility with a single slash of her rapier-like cigarette holder.

And Harlow, hell, everybody knows a Harlow: that tall slender quiet blonde with the great sad green eyes and an air of some Haunting Secret about her. Harlow, Miss Philadelphia, won the Grand Prix after a long, excruciating, heartbreaking Semifinalist competition against some rather stupendous runners-up. There has been talk of a fix, but when Sabrina crowns a tearful Harlow at last, and Miss Emory embraces her, sobbing, well . . . This reviewer wept, in all truth, quite spontaneously, and his old lady nearly got up and walked out.

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**The Queen** is not too long, and Grove has seen fit to tack on a couple of short subjects to fill up the first fortyfive minutes or so. The first, **Les Eves Futures**, is an interminable French vignette in black and white, no dialogue, that juxtaposes the operations of a mannequin factory with the activities of some human models; the most that comes out of it is the revelation that female human beings, no matter how poorly directed, are invariably dis-

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tinguishable immediately from plaster mannequins. The other short, "2," is one of the funniest things there ever was in any theatre. It's a slick, Carlo Ponti-ish anecdote concerning a young couple's ill-starred romance at the seashore. Although both of them are eager to get laid, rolling around the beach in evening clothes to a background of sexy soporific music, neither will admit to a less corrupted soul than the other. "I'm rotten," she says, in California-accented Italian. "Yes," his subtitles reply, "but underneath that rot, you're beautiful." "I'll beat you," he warns, "I'll break your nose, your arm, your ribs, your back. Kill!" "And then what?" she breathes. "I've made it with all your friends," she admits. "So have I!" he cries. This goes on, getting more and more repulsive, until ultimately they gross each other out. Renee Taylor has written the final scene for all Italian movies, and she stars very prettily in it.

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