



Tom Hulce is Jonathan, a pizza deliveryman who is also a poet-songwriter, in "Echo Park."

the movies
Dan Greenberg

Tom Hulce offers another character with strong appeal

A bunch of whacky but lovable characters live in "Echo Park" (R) where Mozart delivers pizza. Well, not quite, but close. Former Plymouth resident Tom Hulce, who played the much-acclaimed title role in Milos Forman's "Amadeus," stars as Jonathan, a pizza deliveryman who drives around in a strange contraption with a giant, garish, plastic pizza slice on its roof.

Jonathan's route runs through Echo Park, a run-down Los Angeles neighborhood that is known for attracting Hollywood hopefuls. Of course, when Chaplin lived there, the neighborhood was kept up better.

Jonathan delivers pizza to May (Susan Dey), a tough-spirited, would-be actress who is looking for a boarder. She needs the extra money to augment her barmaid wages and support her 8-year-old son, Henry (Christopher Walker).

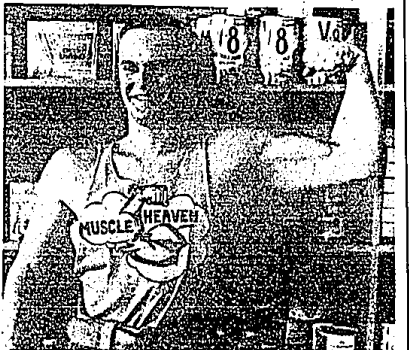
JONATHAN IS so taken by May that he becomes her boarder, quite obviously for love, not for need of lodgings. May does not return his affection, being offhandedly involved with her neighbor, Austrian body-builder August Reizenstein (Michael Bowen).

August is determined to be another Arnold Schwarzenegger. Bowen, incidentally, is David Carradine's brother. August's "big break" is as the lead Viking in an underwear deodorant commercial.

May's big chance, which is even smaller than August's, develops when Hugo (John Paragon) answers her ad for a "Leading Lady." Hugo runs a singing-telegram operation with a twist, the singers are strippers. Nonetheless, May quits bartending for this show-biz opportunity delivering "strippergrams."

That may not be much of a story, but it's enough. "Echo Park's" offset but engaging characters represent everyone's yearning to be somebody. To that, add Michael Ventura's literate script and the cast's excellent characterizations. The result: an entertaining low-key film.

Tom Hulce's performance is of particular interest since his portrait of a reflective, introspective poet-songwriter who survives by delivering pizza is so artfully drawn, humorously enjoyable and



Michael Bowen as August, a body-builder who lives in the run-down Echo Park neighborhood where many Hollywood hopefuls make their homes.

so different from his role in "Amadeus."

GOOD ACTORS ARE, among other things, those who can perform a wide range of characters and avoid stereotypical patterns. Certainly Hulce's Jonathan represents someone about as far as you can get from Mozart and still breathe.

One of the problems an actor faces after a vivid role is that he or she becomes indelibly associated in the audience's mind with a specific character. So often we have great talent wither under that pressure. Henry Winkler may have played Romeo but he's still Fonzie to most of us. Hulce survived "Animal House" and has carved still another memorable character in "Echo Park."

Hulce's warm, sensitive portrayal of a little guy who represents all our hopes and yearnings is complemented by the entire cast. Thirteen-year-old Christopher Walker is a convincing and appealing 8-year-old while John Paragon's Hugo is properly restrained in his show business.

While more could have been done with the character of May's girlfriend, Gloria, Shirley Jo Feyney does as much as possible with that limited part and helps round out the proceedings. Bowen's August is also well-developed and characterized by the sadness evident in every "Echo Park" inhabitant. They each know there's no hope, but they keep dreaming. Hope is found in dreams, and without hope there is no accomplishment, no progress.

Susan Dey's May is a long way from the "Partridge Family" character for which she is best known, and it is much to her credit that she stands as a sad little lady who keeps hoping in the face of despair. Dey's naturalistic style and humanity make "Echo Park" work very well. Hers is, indeed, the lead role.

"ECHO PARK" may be rundown but hasn't run out of steam. It is a fairly quiet movie but has enough energy and good humor to invigorate you all.

As August's father, the Butcher Reizenstein (Holmrich Schweiger), asks, "What are you doing in America?" The answer is Jonathan's: "We are all just delivering pizza."

upcoming things to do

● **SUMMER NIGHTS**
Dancing under the stars is back for the Summer Nights parties at the Troy Hilton's Outdoor Courtyard. Summer Nights will launch its fifth season at 5:30 p.m. Friday, June 6, to the calypso beat of Hugh Borde's Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band and continue through Sept. 13. The entertainment lineup, performing calypso, reggae and pop music throughout the summer, includes Hugh Borde's Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band, Coconut Grove, Teen Angels, Alexander Zornig, Krosswinds, Dumaine and Rumpelstiltskin. Admission is free during the cocktail hour from 5:30-7:30 p.m. After 7:30, cover charge is \$5. Cocktails, food and dancing are offered until 12:30 a.m.

● **MORE MUSIC**
Top 40 bands play for listening and dancing Mondays-Saturdays at Benny's in the Troy Hilton Inn. The Jim Dixon Trio offers jazz entertainment from 7:30 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays in the Trophy Lounge.

● **MUSICAL COMEDY**
St. Dunstan's Guild of Cranbrook will present its spring production of "Guys and Dolls" at 9 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 30-31, and Thursday-Saturday, June 5-7, at Cranbrook's outdoor Greek Theatre in Bloomfield Hills. The cast includes Pat Lynch as Sky Masterson, Joe Lannen as Nathan Detroit, Gary Temple as Nicely-Nicely Johnson and Pat Ward as Sarah Brown. For tickets at \$6 adults, \$5 students, call 644-0527 anytime.

● **CHILDREN'S PLAY**
Henry K. Martin Productions of Birmingham will present "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," a play for children, at 9:30 and 11 a.m. Friday, May 23, and 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Saturday, May 24, at the Community Arts Auditorium at the Michigan State Fairgrounds in Detroit. Tickets will be available at the door, or by reservation at 557-1228.

● **COMEDY CROSSING**
New starting time for the first show at the Comedy Crossing will be 8:30 instead of 8 p.m. The Comedy Crossing offers shows at 8:30 and 11 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays on the lower level of the Red Cedars restaurant in Southfield. Cover charge is \$5 Fridays, \$8 Saturdays. Bob Fosse stars in the show, through May 31, with Mark Sweetman as warm-up comic.

● **LOBBY LOUNGE**
Vocalist Ursula Walker and pianist Buddy Hudson, Detroit-area jazz stylists, perform Fridays-Saturdays in the Lobby Lounge of the Omni International Hotel at Millender Center in Detroit. The art-filled lobby is adjacent to 333 East, the Omni's fine-dining restaurant. Late-night diners and lobby bar patrons may hear the trio from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Walker and Hudson will be joined by bassist Dan Kolton.

● **COMEDY CASTLE**
Bill Kirchenbauer from "Make Me Laugh" and "The Tonight Show," is featured Tuesday-Saturday, May 20-24, at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle & Cafe in Berkley. Rosie O'Donnell from "Star Search" is on stage Tuesday-Saturday, May 27-31. For dinner and show reservations, call 642-9900.

● **SIMON PLAY**
Detroit Center for the Performing Arts will open Neil Simon's "The Gingerbread Lady" on Friday, May 30, in Detroit. The cast includes Bethany Carpenter as Evy, Jan Radcliff as Toby and Harry Carlson as Jimmy. The play runs through Satur-

day, June 21. For reservations and ticket information, call 625-7138.

● **PIANO FESTIVAL**
The Mayflower Piano Festival, hosted by the Mayflower United Church of Christ, will be held Thursday-Sunday, June 5-8, at the church in Detroit. The festival focuses attention on Detroit as the African-American classical music (jazz) piano capital of the world. The schedule includes Sir Roland Hanna and celebrity pianists the Rev. John Corrado, Judge Myron Wahls and Judge Leonard Townsend, June 5; the Kenn Cox Trio and the Charles Epler Trio, June 6; the Stanley Cowell Trio, the Earl Van Riper Trio and the Harold McKinney Duo, June 7, and the Geri Allen Trio, and John Hicks, June 8. The June 5 ticket at \$15 includes a pre-concert reception. Tickets other nights are \$10. A festival series ticket is \$35. For more information, call 861-1388.

● **MUSIC THEATER**
Siouxale and the Banshees, with special guest March Violets, is the attraction at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 23, at the Royal Oak Music Theatre.

Tickets are \$14.75. Tickets are available at the box office, phone 546-7810, and at all Hudson's and Ticket World outlets.

● **AEROSMITH PLAYS**
The band Aerosmith is on stage at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 22, at the Joe Louis Arena in Detroit. Tickets are \$15. For tickets, call the box office at 587-6010. Tickets are also at Hudson's and Ticket World.

● **BLUES, JAZZ**
Fifth annual Frog Island Tent Blues and Jazz Festival will present international jazz artists along with music for blues fans Saturday, June 28, in Ypsilanti. The festival will conclude with a three-hour Chicago Blues All Star Revue, featuring the Lonnie Brooks Blues Band with three special guests, harmonicaist Sugar Blue, saxophonist A.C. Reed and singer Valerie Wellington. The festival opens at noon. Children under 12 are free. Tickets are \$8 in advance and \$10 at the gate. Tickets are on sale in the Detroit-area at Sam's Jams, the Soup Kitchen and Dearborn Music.

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