



Pee-wee Herman gets involved in some silly business after his bicycle is stolen in "Pee-wee's Big Adventure."

## the movies Dan Greenberg

### Pee-wee Herman tries to reclaim bike but loses audience

Pee-wee Herman is a very funny guy, but his humor largely works in the realm of one-line gags, his own particular posturing and graces.

He's funny on television, but unfortunately for all of us Pee-wee Herman fans it doesn't work for 90 minutes, particularly when the script was written with little intelligence and a simple-minded sense of story development.

Pee-wee's most treasured possession is his bicycle, a souped-up Roadmaster with wide tires and enough chrome and gadgetry to remind us all of the big-tined cars of the '50s. The nefarious villain, Pee-wee's fat and wealthy friend, Francis (Mark Holton), wants the bike so badly he has it stolen. That sets the tone of the film, which is ridiculous and silly rather than funny and laughable.

There's absolutely no point in stealing something one can buy a thousand times over. If we are to believe that Pee-wee's bike is so unique that it cannot be bought, then the film is at fault for not making that clear. The plot has no significant generative force. It is just silly.

**IN ANY EVENT.** Pee-wee sets out to recover his bike. Francis has chickened out and resold the bike. Pee-wee hitchhikes to Texas, where a gypsy fortune teller has told him he will find his bike. Along the way he has a few adventures that aren't as funny as they should be.

His trip includes a guided tour of the Alamo, a potentially unpleasant demise at the hands of a biker gang, and other assorted high jinks along the way to recovering his bike in a big chase sequence through the Warner Brothers' lot. Pee-wee also stops in at the local bike shop where his would-be girlfriend, Dottie (Elizabeth Daily), works. Dottie would be his girlfriend if he would let her.

"Pee-wee's Big Adventure" falls flat in its delivery of what might have been a very funny series of sight gags in the best tradition of silent comedy.

In the one really funny sequence, at least at its outset, Pee-wee humorously burlesques romantic Latin stars in a tango on the bar at the biker's hangout in order to convert biker hostility to friendship through laughter.

His classic Valentino stance and movement is funny initially but soon degenerates into a repetitious series of similar movements. Out-liners are funny except when repeated too much. The sequence lacks closeups of Pee-wee's face which are a major element of his style. Eliminating these closeups eliminates much of his appeal.

**TELEVISION IS** an intimate, closeup medium, and that's where Pee-wee first prospered. And for good reason: He's funny with his intimate posturing and facial movements as commentary on the scene. He's not going to make it in long shots on the big screen.

People who deal in one-line gags ought to realize the importance of their punch lines, but that doesn't seem to be the case here. In the film's other potentially funny sequence, Pee-wee leads a merry chase through the Warner Brothers' lot, disrupting production of several films along the way and getting Warner's security force hot in pursuit.

Again, the prime difficulty is the lack of clearly delivered punch lines, which need closeups to punch home their humor and the pace. This chase seems slow. The impact of seeing the havoc wrought by the chase and everybody's reaction to the devastation Pee-wee causes to save his bike is diluted, and there goes the punch.

The whole project is dim-witted and pretty disappointing. It's a shame to misuse a comic like Pee-wee Herman in an enterprise such as this.



Pee-wee shows off his special, souped-up bike.

# State fair judging surprising

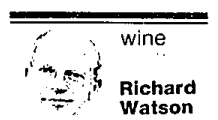
A funny thing happened to me on the way home last Tuesday. There I was, driving up Woodward Avenue, having left the wine competition of the State Fair judging early, confident in the knowledge that either one of two late harvest wines would be awarded Best of Show status again. They had been in my flight so I had tasted them and knew them to be better than previous winners of their type. Late harvest wines in Michigan competitions usually win out over their less glossy and intense competition. I had the beginnings and structure of this column already written in my head.

Then at 5 p.m. the phone rang, and David Brown of the Michigan Beverage News, another judge but one who had wisely waited until the Best of Show announcement was made, dropped the bomb. Not a late harvest, not even a white wine had won. A red wine! The only one of the 12 finalists so colored. (Best of Show is elected from the Gold Award winners only.) Ten had been white, ranging from dry to very sweet, there was a fruit wine (a very fine Cherry from Leelanau Ltd.) and the veteran of previous years, the St. Julian (Paw Paw) 1981 Chardonnay Noir. Trice, it edged out Grand Traverse Select Berry Late Harvest Riesling by only four points (certainly not statistically significant), but a win is a win.

The wine has long been respected; it is a sound wine. But to win the 1985 Best of Show is something else!

There is much disagreement in hybrid wine circles as to which red variety makes the best wine. Some say the Chancellor, some the DeChamane, some the Chassacore, a few even vote for the more vinifiable Foch or the more approachable Baco. And, of our several fine boutique wineries, one does not look to mass producer St. Julian for award winning wines.

Other Gold Medal winners should also be noted, showing well in its classification. In addition to those already noted were the Tabor Hill demi-sec Champagne and their 1983 Raval (Vignoles), Fenn Valley's 1984 Vidal Blanc Reserve, both the 1983 Riesling and the 1983 Late Harvest Dry Riesling from Grand Traverse, Mawby's 1983 Vignole Reserve and their first Chardonnay, a 1984 from the Blenheim Vineyard also won Gold. Fenn Valley also won with their 1984 Dry Vidal Blanc and, in their second year only of competition, Oakland County's Seven Lakes Vineyard in Holly captured a Gold with their Dry Aureole, a very fine entry and a silver award. 16 of them, were won by St. Julian, Tabor Hill, Grand Traverse, Good Harbor, Leelanau Lt. and by



wine  
Richard  
Watson

a new winery to the field, Lemon Creek Vineyards.

In all, 134 wines were entered for competition, up slightly from previous years. It is interesting to note, if somewhat subjective, that the judges as a whole were most laudatory of the wines this year. More Golds were granted and it was generally agreed that there were few unworthy ones. The panel, some 20 people strong, were mostly veterans of previous judgments, and most indicated that winemaking skills in Michigan are making sound gains each year. This was supported by the chief guest, author Leon D. Adams, of "The Wines of America" fame, who has been a regular "guest" (that means he gets paid; we do not) for some time now. "The people of Michigan should be more aware of this fine industry they have," he said.

The other surprise of the day was the presence of Lemon Creek Vineyards. I talked to no one there who had previ-

ously heard of them, and the judges cover a cross-section of the wine world locally; mostly merchants, writers and teachers. From what I could learn, the winery is located in Berrien County and is owned by a family that has farmed the area for decades. They have just now, in 1984, become bonded and this year entered no fewer than six wines in the fair, all of them bearing a 1984 vintage date: Dry Vidal Blanc (Gold), Riesling-Vidal (Bronze), Vidal Blanc (Bronze), and three non-winners, a Johannisberg Riesling, a Baco Rose and a Ruby Rose. Winning medals with half of their first entries is very good indeed; my initial impressions of their wines were most favorable.

One discordant note must be sounded in this otherwise harmonious review. Missing from the event this year after previous undistinguished showings was the Zug Island Winery. It seems that their entries were mistakenly sent to the Upper Peninsula State Fair in Escanaba instead of to Detroit and, when they were hurriedly being returned through Wisconsin, were held up by a local customs official who misunderstood them when he saw that they were green. Well, what is to be done? The University of Wisconsin. Better luck next year, Bronco.

## upcoming

### CARILLON RECITAL

Roland Richter, associate carillonist of Kirk in the Hills, will give two 30-minute concerts at 10 a.m. and noon Sunday, Sept. 1, at the church in Bloomfield Hills.

### 'STAGE STRUCK'

Jimmy Launce Productions Inc. will present "Stage Struck," a comedy thriller by Simon Gray, in dinner-theater format beginning Friday, Sept. 6, at Somerset Dinner Theatre at Somerset Mall in Troy. Performances are Fridays-Saturdays with doors opening at 7 p.m., dinner at 7:30 and curtain at 8:45, and Wednesdays with doors opening at noon. Admission is \$22.95 per person inclusive for the evening performance and luncheon. For reservations, call the Cafe Jardin at 649-1359.

### SEASON'S TICKETS

Subscription series tickets are on sale for the 1985-86 season of the Oakland University Center for the Arts. Ten theater, dance and musical events are scheduled on campus near Rochester. Among shows are "False Magic," the world premiere of a 17th-century play by William Maw; George Bernard Shaw's "Man and Superman"; a murder-mystery, "Wayside Motor Inn," and the musical "Carousel." For more information, call 370-3013.

### MONTREUX DETROIT

Sarah Vaughan, Ramsey Lewis, Sonny Rollins, Tanika Maria, Ron Carter, Michel Petrucciani, Toshiko Akiyoshi and Steps Ahead headline the 1985 Montreux Detroit Jazz Festival, Wednesday, Aug. 28, to Monday, Sept. 2. The series features 20 ticketed and 75 free concerts. Tickets \$5-\$17.50 are

available by calling the festival ticket office at 259-7749.

### BYGONE ERA

The sixth annual Michigan Renaissance Festival continues Saturdays-Sundays through Sept. 29 at the Colombaro Center in Clarkston. Shakespeare will be honored at the Midsummer's Feast, with faeries, witches and wizards in attendance, Aug. 24-25. Adult tickets are \$7.75 at the gate, \$6.75 in advance at Folioant stores, AAA offices, Ticket World and the festival office (645-9640) in Birmingham. Children 5-12 are \$3.50 at the gate, \$2.50 in advance. Under 5 is free.

### ROLES AVAILABLE

Resume and photos are being accepted for the production "The Member of the Wedding" at the State Fair Theatre in Detroit. Send to: MMD Productions, P.O. Box 31009, Detroit 48231. Auditions are by appointment only.

### AUDITIONS OPEN

Metropolitan Youth Symphony will have auditions for the 1985-86 season and Saturday, Aug. 31 (symphony orchestra). Students in grades 5-12 may reserve an audition time by calling 591-1408.

### 20TH TELETHON

Jerry Lewis' 20th annual Telethon to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association will be televised on WJBK-TV, Channel 2, during the Labor Day weekend, Sunday-Monday, Sept. 1-2. Returning for their third year as co-hosts will be J.P. McCarthy and George Selis.

### WEEKEND FESTIVAL

The ninth annual Labor Day Weekend Festival will be held Saturday, Aug. 31; Sunday, Sept. 1, and Monday,

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