

'Delicatessen' overloads audience with wild ideas



JOHN MONAGHAN

"Delicatessen" makes movies seem young again. The French import, enjoying its ann premiere at Ann Arbor's Michigan Theatre, is chock full of crazy ideas and style to spare.

Visually, the movie is an eye-popper right from the opening credits, in which the camera glides across names reflected on mirrors or embossed on miniature circus posters.

It's the near future. Cattle and plant life have apparently been wiped off the face of the earth. Dead corn and beans are now used as money. No one questions the origins of the meaty parcels sold by the local butcher. They also try not to leave their apartments after dark.

When the butcher loses another assistant to the laws of supply and demand, another and goes in the paper. This time the new man is a puppet circus clown named Lulson (Dominique Pinon), who falls in love with the butcher's daughter (Marie-Laure Dougnac).

This is the first feature film by the directing team of Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro. Jeunet concentrates on hunting incredible performances from the talented cast.

Jean-Claude Dreyfus plays a character known only as "The Butcher." Sometimes he looks like your average slobby couch potato, an overweight Pee Wee Herman. Light him from below and put a meat cleaver in his hand and he becomes a bulging-eyed monstrosity.

Co-director Caro is a longtime video experimentalist responsible for the movie's knockout visual effects. He creates a series of flube Gold-Berg situations, especially in the elaborate suicide attempts rigged

up by a neurotic neighbor.

The directors cite early French filmmakers like Rene Clair and American animator Tex Avery as their primary influences. In their hands, the simple sounds of everyday life stand to truly hilarious situations.

In one inspired sequence, lovers

fall onto a squeaky bed. Their escalating rhythms echo through the pipes, sending the progress of a painter, a cellist, a woman beating a carpet, and a man with a bicycle pump into a cross-cutting frenzy.

Brown-tinted cinematography by Darius Khondji gives the film a retro-futuristic feel, with the clothes

and mechanical contraptions reminiscent of Europe during World War II.

The camera swirls in and out of pipes and heating ducts. When Lulson employs the metal booming affectionately dubbed "The Australian," the audience flies right along with it toward an intended

target.

Audiences may have trouble keeping up with the frantic pace, which purposely mimics a live-action cartoon. The episodic situations and the radical way they are filmed make it easy to get caught up in the world these wily French filmmakers have so skillfully created.

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Undercover: Pascal Benezech conceals his identity with the help of a paper bag and a trash can in Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro's "Delicatessen."

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(Free)
- "Harrison," July 3 at dusk.** In this unusual religious switch on your usual night at the drive-in, the Antioch Baptist Church now shows movies outdoors on the weekends. The movie sound is broadcast over AM 530 or FM 87.9 on your car radio. There's even a concession stand. This week's feature is about a group of delinquents who learn about Christ.
- HENRY FORD CENTENNIAL LIBRARY**
16301 Michigan Ave., Dearborn.
Call 943-2037 for information.
(Free)
- "The Perils of Pauline" (USA - 1947), 7 p.m. June 29.** Betty Hutton stars in this musical biography of silent serial queen Pearl White.
- JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER**
1510 W. Ten Mile, Oak Park. Call 967-4030. (Free)
- "Two Sisters" (USA - 1938), 10 a.m. June 30.** A slice-of-life drama about the romances and conflicts of an older sister and the younger sister who raises. Continuing a weekly series of Yiddish-language films with English subtitles. Shown on large-screen video.
- MAPLE THEATRE**
4145 E. Maple, Bloomfield. Call 855-9090 for information. (\$5.50, \$3.75 twilight)
- "Howards End" (Britain - 1992).** A romantic tale of two families and the inheritance of a beloved ancestral home. In the tradition of "A Room With a View," the producer/director team of Ismail Merchant and James Ivory turn out another H.M. Forster novel with completely winning results.
- MICHIGAN THEATRE**
603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Call 668-8397 for information. (\$5, \$4 students and senior citizens)
- "Delicatessen" (France - 1991), through July (call for show times).** A comedy set in the near future in which cattle are scarce and a butcher stays in business by tossing his unwitting assistants into the meat grinder. A group of vegetarian vigilantes, however, are trying to put him out of business.



Helena Bonham Carter: Appears in "Howard's End," now playing at the Maple Theatre.

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