



## FACT SHEET

Week beginning 10 April 2007

### Media, Film and Technology Scoop

The good old Readers' Digest used to have a section called Laughter – The Best Medicine and who could disagree with that proposition.

A good laugh is a sure-fire way to make anyone feel better.

A few years ago I was laid up in hospital and feeling pretty miserable.

But then the midday movie popped up on the overhead TV and it just happened to be Woody Allen's wonderful comedy *Annie Hall*

Now this movie was released in 1977 and I guess I had seen it at least three or four times before it came to my screen in the hospital room.

However, it's such a brilliantly written and performed timeless romantic comedy that when it concluded, two hours later, I was sure I felt a great deal better.

Of course *Annie Hall* is a quite an extraordinary movie.

It won an Oscar for best picture; won Woody Allen two other Oscars – for Best Director and Best Screenplay and gorgeous Diane Keaton was awarded an Oscar for Best Actress.

Who could forget the way in which she brought to life Woody's frustratingly fey girlfriend – her daffy character's inability to fully engage with the reality of the world around her encapsulated in her mantra: "La di dah"

Some people regard *Annie Hall* as Woody Allen's best movie and it's hard to argue with this assessment although there are plenty of his other movies which have also given us great pleasure.

You could list off: "Play It Again Sam", "Love and Death", "Sleeper", and "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex.."

Lost of laughs in all of these.

However, as Woody himself says in one of his movies – I forget which one – all of these movies date from his "early – funny - period."

In fact this clutch of very funny movies all date from the early to mid 1970's.

*Annie Hall* is the most recent of them and, significantly, in 1978, the year following the release of *Annie Hall*, Woody ventured into very serious drama with the movie called *Interiors*.

This movie was a kind of homage to the dour Swedish maestro Ingmar Bergman and there were no laughs at all – not so much as a smile on a summer’s night.

*Interiors* proved to be something of a turning point in Woody’s career. He has continued to produce movies at the rate of about one each year and, while many of them have been interesting, well-crafted pictures there have not been very many laughs to be found in them.

And some of these movies have, unfortunately, been complete duds.

This is hardly surprising when you consider the creative effort involved in pushing out a feature movie on an annual basis. And especially when you consider that Woody usually writes, directs and acts in the movies.

However, although I have sat through my share of the duds, I remain a loyal devotee of Woody’s product and I usually go along for my annual Woody fix – perhaps subconsciously hoping that, one of these years, he will come up with another *Annie Hall* or another *Play it Again Sam*.

And so it was that I went along recently to see his latest release – a movie called *Scoop*.

Well, you can’t win ‘em all.

*Scoop* is one of those murder mysteries without any serious consequences. It’s a kind of contemporary Agatha Christie yarn set in London with the Miss Marple character being replaced by a cub reporter played by Scarlett Johansson. Australia’s Hugh Jackman plays the handsome, aristocratic man of mystery who may – or perhaps, may not – be the fiend responsible for a series of dastardly murders.

Sadly the movie never reaches take-off speed.

Where there are supposed to be laughs there are a few forced chuckles. But, mostly, I found myself squeezing up a wan smile and trying, against the odds, to will good old Woody to conjure up some magic which would bring the movie to life.

No such luck.

I gave *Scoop* a, somewhat grudging, one and a half stars – a kind of nostalgic award out of gratitude for the real joy which Woody has delivered in the past. You’ll know what I mean if you bother to see it - but let’s hope it doesn’t turn up as the midday movie sometime when you’re laid up in hospital.

It won’t make you feel a whole lot better.

Woody’s next movie is called *Cassandra’s Dream* and is due for release later this year. From what I read it’s a drama about two brothers who are London crooks and the femme fatale who comes between them. Not likely to be too many laughs in that one I’d say.

Seems like us Woody devotees will have to wait a little longer for him to re-ignite the spark of his early – funny movies.

John McGowan  
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