

New Hollywood: American 70s

Sleeper 1973

Friday, December 11 - Thursday, December 17, 2009



Film Information

Directed by

Woody Allen

Language

English / Yiddish

Running Time

89 minutes

Film Notes

When a director has a career as long and varied as Woody Allen, you can witness the development and evolution of their voice and style as a filmmaker through their vast body of work. *SLEEPER* is at the beginning stage of Allen's prolific career, his fourth in a lengthy stream of films. His pace of about a film a year for the past three decades is astonishing, and the breadth of content and tone is hugely impressive. *SLEEPER* fits snugly amongst his early works of zany, satirical comedies with outlandish premises. Prior to directing, Allen was a stand-up comic and gag writer, and this background is quite apparent. The film follows a narrative, but it's the jokes and physical comedy that drive the film – albeit at a breakneck pace.

Allen plays the reluctant and somewhat bumbling hero of *SLEEPER*, combining the dry wit and delivery of his idol Bob Hope with the physical humor and visual sight gags of Chaplin and Keaton. As an interesting side note, the hilarious-looking robotic butler uniform was the work of costume designer and future director Joel Schumacher. Sure, it's slapstick, but it's comedy with a brain. And most importantly, it's funny.

SLEEPER marks an interesting point in Allen's filmmaking path. It was his first collaboration with Diane Keaton, a successful partnership that continued with

his next four films and sparked a tradition of Allen finding strong and complex female muses to work with on multiple movies. *SLEEPER* was also a success, and this gave Allen the confidence to further stretch himself. Though his next film *LOVE AND DEATH* was in a similar vein, Allen was itching to do something more dramatic, closer to the work of his favorite European directors such as Antonioni and Bergman. His successive film *ANNIE HALL* brilliantly combined comedy, with drama, heart and substance.

Allen describes his natural inclination at the time towards weightier stories: "Chaplin and Keaton worked in a very physical world where people worked and struggled to cope with tangible obstacles and frustrations. I think the conflicts are interior now. They're psychological conflicts, and it's difficult to find a vocabulary to express those inner states, to make them visual."

—Lindsay



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“I haven’t seen my analyst in 200 years. He was a strict Freudian. If I’d been going all this time, I’d probably almost be cured by now.”

More Information

Screenplay by

Woody Allen

Featuring

Woody Allen
Diane Keaton
John Beck
Mary Gregory
Don Keefer
John McLiam
Bartlett Robinson
Chris Forbes
Mews Small

Cinematography by

David M. Walsh

Film Editing by

O. Nicholas Brown
Ron Kalish
Ralph Rosenblum

Original Music by

Woody Allen

Country of Origin

USA

“SLEEPER is a picture every kid in America could see and find funny. It’s exactly the kind of picture that I used to see as a kid and love. I don’t want to be confined to intellectual humor, especially since I have zero intellectual credentials. Chaplin had some very hip jokes in his stuff. I’m tired of being thought of as special for that Third Avenue crowd... I can make an audience laugh with just physical comedy. But it’s not easy to be a physical genius the way Chaplin was. For those guys, it wasn’t just a question of executing a sight gag. Keaton and Chaplin had a particular beautiful grace—physical genius.”

—Woody Allen

Also Recommended by Woody Allen

Bananas 1971
Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex
But Were Afraid to Ask 1972
Love and Death 1975
Annie Hall 1977
Manhattan 1979
Stardust Memories 1980
A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy 1982
Zelig 1983