

Presenting botanical mutation, vocal ranges, and Broadway-quality comedy in their finest forms, the UVM cast and crew of *Little Shop of Horrors* proved worthy of their enthusiastic ovation. From cleverly mastering the nuances of Audrey II, a plant with a penchant for prime, USDA human meat to capturing the absurdity of the farce's characters, the cast was truly wonderful.

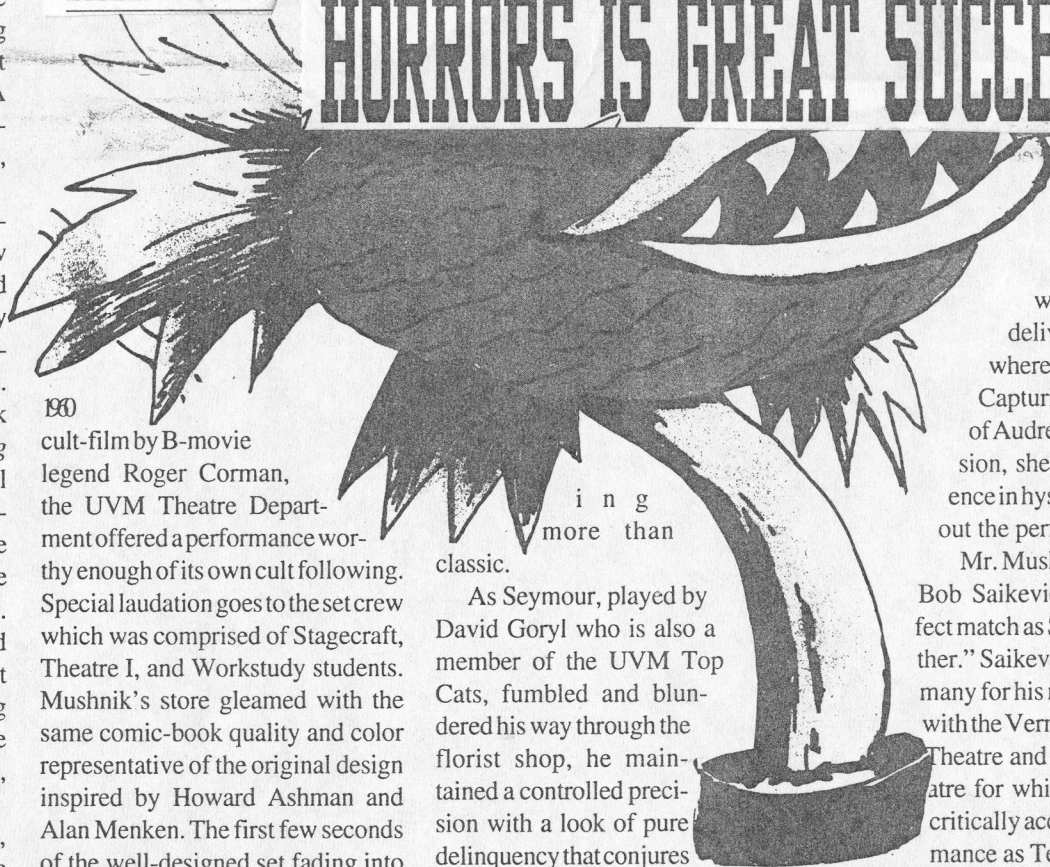
Under the seasoned hand of director Mark Alan Gordon, a New York City actor, director, and teacher, the comedy was nicely flavored by the musical accompaniment of veteran, Martin Guigui. Gordon is also known for his work on UVM's sold out success *King Lear* and the whimsical musical *The Fantasticks*. As an almost musical prodigy, Guigui maintains the prestigious title as one of the Northeast's greatest musicians. Classically trained and endowed with a long career, he gave his first violin performance at the young age of five. Not only does he dabble in the theatre and local music scene, but also in the film industry.

As a composer of film scores, he is contracted to score the music for *Deception*, written by Frank D'Ambra, to be produced by Rob Reiner. The UVM band that added to Guigui's skill was also a sheer highlight. Not to mention Phish drummer, John Fishman also contributed his own tuned touch. With the experienced, musical talent of Guigui and Gordon's trained direction *Little Shop of Horrors* has the quality semblance of a finely crafted piece of art.

Billed as a hilarious spoof of the

ORGANIC SPECTACLE: LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS IS GREAT SUCCESS

EILEEN RILEY



⌘ cult-film by B-movie legend Roger Corman, the UVM Theatre Department offered a performance worthy enough of its own cult following. Special laudation goes to the set crew which was comprised of Stagecraft, Theatre I, and Workstudy students. Mushnik's store gleamed with the same comic-book quality and color representative of the original design inspired by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken. The first few seconds of the well-designed set fading into focus were only a precursor to one of UVM's finest student performances to date.

As the lights slowly lit the stage, the four "urchins," or singers with attitude, belted out the opening bars to a series of outstanding deliveries. Played by Yuroba Brady, Kelly Brown, Lupe Megyesi, and Pamela Toof, the rhythmic quartet accentuated the scenes and vividly brought life to the stage. Their rendition of "Little Shop of Horrors" was nothing

more than classic.

As Seymour, played by David Goryl who is also a member of the UVM Top Cats, fumbled and blundered his way through the florist shop, he maintained a controlled precision with a look of pure delinquency that conjures up images of Jerry Lewis as some derelict professor. He gathered a tight command of his performance from the start. His introductory song, "Da-Doo" performed with the urchins, was well done, but his elocution in "Git It" was fantastic.

As equally entertaining and well done was Senior Jodi Fish's portrayal of the co-dependent Audrey. Clad in nothing less than the best bowling alley garb, she demonstrated her natural acting talent, as well as,

her stellar voice.

Her piece de resistance was clearly her delivery of "Somewhere That's Green." Capturing the essence of Audrey's clouded vision, she kept the audience in hysterics throughout the performance.

Mr. Mushnik, played by Bob Saikevicz, was a perfect match as Seymour's "father." Saikevicz is known to many for his numerous roles with the Vermont Repertory Theatre and the Lyric Theatre for which he gave his critically acclaimed performance as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. As he and Goryl belted out the lyrics to "Mushnik and Son," it was clear that it was more than gimpish looks that binded them together, but rather conditioned acting and performing.

Orin, the sadistic dentist with the looks of James Dean gone amuck, was creatively and skeezily portrayed by John Alexander. In his cackling performance of "Dentist," Alexander was startling effective as a psychopathic misfit. No one harbored any

doubts about his ability to act or fuse the comical with the musical.

At center stage, both literally and figuratively, was the overbearing presence of Audrey II. Animated with the voice Eric Mitchell and the mechanics of Page Warner and Peter Bassett, the plant was defined by a distinctive personality. Mitchell endowed Audrey of a deep, resonating growl that was worthy of a carnivorous plant consumed by an addiction to human blood. An exact replica of the monstrous plant used in the original New York production, is comprised of four separate plant puppets which show the gradation of Audrey II's growth. The last and most dynamic puppet is constructed out of foam rubber, stands over seven-and-a-half feet high, and weighs over one-hundred pounds. Requiring three people to operate, not including Mitchell's voice, the plant is unquestionably one of the greatest props and icons of the modern theatre.

The costumes of the show can't go without notice. The flashy, sixties garb of the urchins called to mind the best nightware of *The Dreamgirls*. Audrey's less than elegant eveningware was both hilarious and effective. Thaler did a phenomenal job.

The union of an acclaimed director, a troop of renowned musicians, acclaimed actors, and a cast of highly talented individuals is a full proof production destined for success and praise. The cast and crew of *Little Shop of Horrors* demonstrated a "Big Show of Greatness."