

TV Review: ‘Mel Brooks: Make a Noise’ Captures Comedy Genius

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 20, 2013 - 9:47am

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CHICAGO – I’m a huge Mel Brooks fan, one of those critics who bows at the altar of arguably the two best comedies of all time, “Blazing Saddles” & “Young Frankenstein.” I’ve seen them both a dozen times and can’t wait to watch them again. “The Producers,” “A History of the World,” “High Anxiety,” “Silent Movie,” “To Be or Not To Be,” “The Twelve Chairs,” his work on “Get Smart” & “Your Show of Shows,” “The 2000 Year Old Man” — the first response that most people should have to “American Masters: Mel Brooks: Make a Noise,” debuting on PBS tonight and releasing on DVD tomorrow, May 21, 2013, is a simple one — What took so long? “American Masters” premiered in 1986 and he should have been one of the first choices.



Television Rating: **4.5/5.0**

To be fair, “Make a Noise” doesn’t do much more than confirm what most of us fans of Brooks already knew about the man. If you’re hoping for deep, enlightening probing of what makes Brooks tick, you might be a bit disappointed. I was actually most interested in why Brooks tailed off creatively and hasn’t directed a movie in two decades. There’s a bit about changing tastes and the fact that anyone who reached the peak of Brooks in the ’70s and ’80s was bound to come in below expectations but the relative failures of Brooks are briefly mentioned (“Dracula Dead and Loving It”) or completely ignored (“Life Stinks”). The doc virtually skips from “Spaceballs” to the comeback with “The Producers” on stage.



Mel Brooks: Make a Noise
Photo credit: PBS

As for things I did learn/think while watching “Make a Noise”:



Mel Brooks: Make a Noise
Photo credit: PBS

1. It's amazing how many of Brooks's team is gone. Madeline Kahn, Cleavon Little, Peter Boyle, Marty Feldman, and, of course, the magical Anne Bancroft. And Gene Wilder didn't come out for an interview. So, while hearing from people like Matthew Broderick, Nathan Lane, and Steven Weber about the magic of Brooks, I found the archival interviews, many of them on talk shows, the most insightful. Actual peers like Cloris Leachman and Carl Reiner have the most insight here.

2. Mel Brooks is still damn funny. He comes bounding into his interview with the energy of someone a quarter of his age and he hits every line, every joke, every anecdote. There have been rumors lately that he could direct again and I really hope that happens. He's still got the comedic chops.

3. As funny as you think Mel Brooks was, "Make a Noise" makes the case that he was funnier. The clip choices are pitch perfect, finding great beats from "History of the World," "Blazing Saddles," and the rest of the gang. They even made me want to watch "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" again.

Only 14 people have pulled the notorious EGOT — Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony. Mel Brooks is one of them. 10, 20, 100 years from now, people will still be watching Brooks's best comedies and learning the art of the laugh from them. It may be a little more surface level than I was hoping when it began, but if "American Masters" can convert more people into recognizing the talents of one of the best comedy directors of all time it's served a more important purpose than any TV this month. Fans of Brooks should definitely check it out. Scratch that. Fans of laughing should definitely check it out.

"American Masters: Mel Brooks: Make a Noise" premieres on PBS on Monday, May 20, 2013 at 8pm CST and will be released on DVD on May 21, 2013.



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