Murphy shines, Akroyd doesn't in "Trading Places"

By TOM SAKELL
Collegian Staff Writer

"Trading Places" is a film filled with role reversals, double crosses and switcheroos — but the moviegoer is the one who gets it in the end in this half-hearted attempt at the prince and the pauper motif.

The plot revolves around Louis Winthrop III (Dan Aykroyd), a rich, snobby, Ivy League commodities broker, and Billy Ray Valentine (Eddie Murphy), a poverty-stricken con man barely making it on the streets of Philadelphia. Through a bet by Winthrop's employers, Valentine is taken from the ghetto and made manager of the brokerage firm. Meanwhile, Winthrop is tossed onto the pavement and abandoned by his fiancee and friends.

The idea is interesting, but the flick has lapses in logic. How can a man from the ghetto do the job of a man with a masters in business administration from Harvard? What can Billy Ray Valentine possibly know about pork bellies?

Only a true Dan Aykroyd fan could excuse the Not-Ready-For-Prime-Time Player for his performance here. If you observe him closely, you can see all those characters Aykroyd made popular every weekend on Saturday Night Live — from the Tom Snyder impersonation to the shylock who sells Baj-O-Glass to children at Christmas. None of them work in this character.

However, his version of the condescending and snotty rich boy with the monogrammed boxer shorts and alligator skin wallet works so well that you hate him throughout the entire story, even when you are supposed to sympathize with him. Even as a bum standing in the pouring rain, with a dog urinating on his leg, you would love to see life dump on Winthrop some more.

Eddie Murphy has his moments of brilliance, although the script confines his impromptú comedy style. If the film's writers could have dropped the racial slurs and used him simply as a comedian instead of a black comedian, Murphy could have been great. The prince and the pauper switch offers enough contrast without dumping racial differences atop it.

The most recent SNL star shines when he is the focus of attention in a scene, but both Murphy and Aykroyd seem uncomfortable when sharing the screen. Murphy is at his best as he impersonates a crippled and blind war veteran begging on the sidewalks and in the parks. Grabbing the skirt of a passing woman, he informs her, "Once you've had a man with no legs, you'll never go back."

In a supporting role that makes little sense, Jamie Lee Curtis is terrific. As a young, soft-hearted hooker with brains, she takes Winthrop in off the streets, displaying a sensuality and a figure that never quite surfaced in "Halloween." Yet how could a woman so smart — "I've got $42,000 in T-bills. I figure another three years on my back and I can retire" — be so dumb as to fall in love with the whiny Winthrop?

If nothing else, the movie proves Murphy and Curtis both have tremendous abilities and potential, and moviegoers will line up when they appear in films that use their talents to the fullest.

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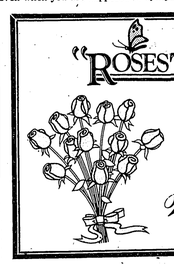

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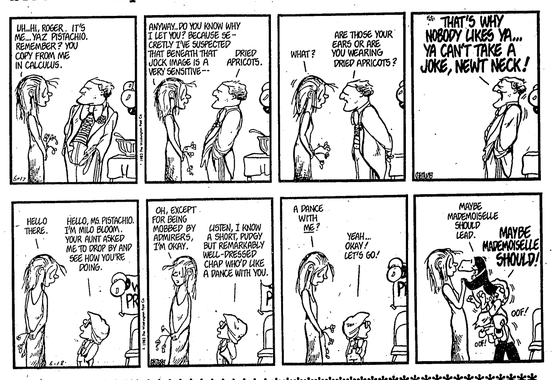

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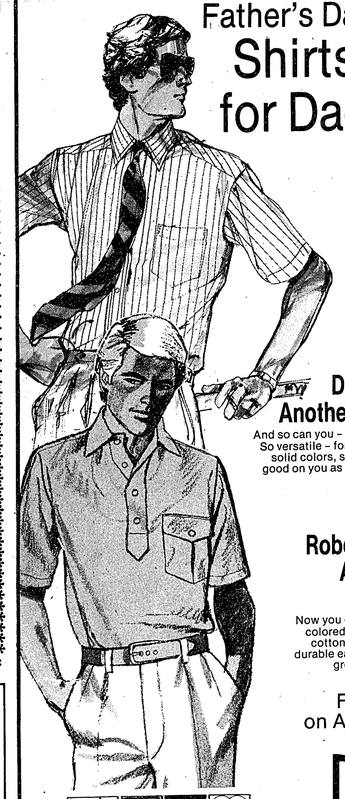

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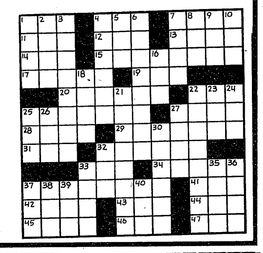

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7 Coarse hominy
11 Affirmative
12 English horn
13 Compass
14 Click beetle
15 Wood hyacinth
17 Asian mountain range
19 Feminine name
20 Estimate
22 Greek letter
25 Peace pipe
27 Warmth
28 Hebrew weight
29 Counter
31 Espouse
32 Jockeys
33 Ghastly
34 Perch
37 Stewards
41 Strange
42 Parol
43 Cathedra
44 Friend, in Paris
45 Depend
46 Unhappy
47 Lease

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2 Mahomet
3 Having entrances
4 Rent
5 Wire grass
6 Collared
7 Philippine cooking banana
8 Guido's note
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16 Half ems
18 Assyrian god of war
21 Weirdness
22 Private
23 Possesses
24 Adjective suffix
25 Threaten
26 Rice paste
27 Nil
30 Learned
32 Roofing slate
33 Constitutional
35 Powdered: Heraldic
36 Tease
37 Crowd
38 Textile screw pine
39 Masefield character
40 Turmeric