

Episode 12 - Sleeper (1973)

Introduction

SLEEPER is the 4th film written and directed by Woody Allen, first released in 1973.

Woody Allen stars as Miles Monroe, a man who has been frozen for 200 years. He wakes to find himself in a strange futuristic world, run by an oppressive, big-brother-like government force. Things get worse when he unwittingly becomes part of the underground movement and causes a revolution.

SLEEPER is another in the early run of high concept set ups for Woody Allen's comedy. But it sees Allen's continued growth as a visual director and a writer with more than just jokes. And probably most importantly of all – it marks the arrival of DIANE KEATON into his films.

Welcome to the Woody Allen Pages Podcast, by me, the creator of the Woody Allen Pages website. This week, episode 12, we look at 1973's SLEEPER. How it was conceived, how it was made, and how it's great. Spoilers are everywhere so watch the film first, then come back.

MILES: Look, I cannot get into this discussion about erno with you. I'm getting a hostility ache, and a migraine headache now. And I haven't seen my analyst in years. And he was a strict freudian and if I'd been going all this time, I'd probably almost be cured by now.

Conception and story

So we're back in the early years of Woody Allen. And early years of Woody Allen means comedy - the kind of comedy where Allen would star, essentially playing the same character, and get to be funny. It's the kind of thing that GROUCHO MARX or BOB HOPE did. I mean, it's not that far from what JIM CARREY or EDDIE MURPHY did for many years. People loved funny Woody Allen, and they wanted to go to the cinema to see funny Woody Allen. What would change was the setting and the idea. Allen remains the same.

What also changed with this film was the co-writer. In his first two films, Allen had a co-writer in MICKEY ROSE. For SLEEPER he asked MARSHALL BRICKMAN to help. Brickman was a musician who ended up in comedy writing,

and was a staffer at THE TONIGHT SHOW and THE DICK CAVETT SHOW. Allen liked Brickman because he liked music and he was funny. The two would write three more films together, including ANNIE HALL and MANHATTAN.

Allen and BRICKMAN's original idea was a three hour comedy epic that would be in two parts with an intermission. You know, like GONE WITH THE WIND. The two parts would be set in two different time periods - the present and the future. The present would be like what Allen had made before - we would meet a character in modern day New York and he would get into comic situations. The second half would be set in the future, after our character travels there.

That crazy idea was at least showing that Allen had this huge ambition. He wanted to make more than what he made before - and had started around this time talking about wanting to make great cinema. And from here, you can see him feel restricted by what comedy could do.

His studio, United Artists, were not exactly thrilled at the thought of a three hour film. It was also clear that the future stuff was the most interesting stuff - and so Allen settled on a more sensible path of making the second part, the future part, the whole film (and a film of conventional length). Although the modern day life of Miles Monroe, as our hero would be named, lives in the script in his occupation as a health food store owner and musician.

DR MELIK: I know it's hard, Miles, but try to think of this as a miracle of science.

MILES: To me, a miracle is I go in for a minor operation, I come out the next day, my rent isn't 2,000 months overdue.

What attracted Allen to the idea of the future was the ability to break rules. In the future, nothing had to be realistic. He had played around with science fiction in one segment of his last film - 1972's EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX* (*BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK). The experience of making that short segment inspired Allen to explore science fiction further.

One of the sci fi ideas was a future society that was essentially silent, where only the elite could talk. It would be an excuse for Allen to do some slapstick silent comedy, in the vein of CHARLIE CHAPLIN or HAROLD LLOYD. Allen had flirted with this in the films he made before SLEEPER. Long sequences in TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN and BANANAS were essentially silent comedy sequences. Allen really wanted to lean into it with this film. Again - as a sign of his growing ambition he flirted with making this a completely silent film - not even having the elite talk. Or at least that the second part of his original two part epic would be silent. Allen stepped back from this idea as well.

Either way, what Allen ended up with was a script where there was a lot of silent sequences. It wasn't a whole silent film, but you can see that silent comedy is what Allen was striving for. And sure, you would have to agree that a three hour, two part epic where the second half is silent would be commercial poison. But Mel Brooks made *Silent Movie* in 1976 and *The Artist* won an Oscar in 2011 - so it could be done. I guess.

DR ORVA: Would you like some more? MILES: This tastes awful. I could have made a fortune selling it in my health food store.

But let's face it, seeing Allen do a lot of silent comedy wasn't the hook of this film. It was Woody Allen in the future. In fact, in France they just called the film *Woody And The Robots*. And if you wanted a *Snakes On A Plane* type title then *Woody And The Robots* was it.

The sci fi premise was pretty simple - that Miles would simply wake up in the future after a long sleep. Cryogenics had been used many times in fiction, but there were actually very few films about it by the time *SLEEPER* came out. Of course, since then there's been everything from *Austin Powers*, *Alien*, *Idiocracy*, *Futurama* and much more. It was semi groundbreaking at the time, but it surely doesn't feel very groundbreaking now.

The most obvious precedent for Allen was the HG Wells book *THE SLEEPER AWAKES* in 1899. That book popularised the idea of a sleeper. The hero of Wells' book was also unfrozen 200 years in the future and also gets caught up in a revolution against the powers that be. The similarities between Allen's *SLEEPER* and the Wells book was not lost on people. Filmmaker GEORGE PAL, who directed the 1960 version of HG Wells' *THE TIME MACHINE*, had been working for years on a film version of *THE SLEEPER AWAKES*. This film effectively killed that project.

Allen actually checked his work with science fiction experts - claiming he was a Luddite with such things. First he had lunch with legendary science fiction author ISAAC ASIMOV. Asimov is one of the most acclaimed science fiction writers and thinkers ever and definitely knew a few things about robots. Over the lunch, Asimov reassured Allen that the script was fine. Allen also asked Asimov to join the film as a consultant in case anything changed during production. He wasn't able to do it, but suggested fellow sci fi writer BEN BOVA, who took the job.

More than the cryogenics stuff, there's other fun sci fi bits throughout the film. There's cloning, super computers, various gadgets and fun stuff. The science fiction stuff was strong enough that Allen actually won two sci-fi awards

- the international honour of a Hugo and an American award for the Nebula. Both had are science fiction awards that had a film writing category. This was before Allen won a single Oscar.

MILES: That's science. I don't believe in science. Science is an intellectual dead end. It's a lot of guys in tweed suits, cutting up frogs on foundation grants. LUNA: I see. You don't believe in science. And you also don't believe that political systems work and you don't believe in God, huh? MILES: Right. LUNA: So, then... what do you believe in? MILES: Sex and death. Two things that come once in a lifetime. But at least after death you're not nauseous.

So with the world set, and a rough story in place, Allen set about putting in the funny. The show pieces are the silent comedy, slapstick stuff. But Allen delivers more than just physical comedy - he pretty much uses every trick in the book. And it's a pretty funny book.

There's a fair bit of big set stuff and prop stuff. Where the humour comes from Miles leaning against a big tape recorder or a big mass of out of control slime. You can't introduce a big banana without doing a big banana peel gag. There's a particularly silly bit where Miles knocks someone out using a big chunk of Blue Cheese. It's not clever - but the bits are so stupid it's funny. Big dumb props don't date too badly.

Then there's funny gadgets. The ultra modern chair and the orgasmatron. There's jetpacks and hydro suits. There's a tech update given to the old Marx Brothers mirror scene in DUCK SOUP but instead of two Marx Brothers, it's Woody and a video of Woody.

Some of the gadgets like the hydro suit required stunt work. More than a couple of times Miles finds himself hanging off a tall building. Allen did a lot of the stunts, but he also used a stunt double. He also later remarked that his memory of making this film was wires. It makes this production sound like an action film - and it kind of was. If you look at the script, Allen put silent comedy sequences where the action sequences would normally go. Basically, Jackie Chan could have made this film as one of his action comedies, with fights instead of slapstick, and very little would have to change.

I wonder what the shooting script for SLEEPER actually looks like, because so much of it is improvised. The best of it is those silent sequences where I can't imagine the script has much more script than - there is a field of giant fruit. Woody Allen to act silly.

The best of these sequences for me are not the big sets or stunts. It's not the stuff where Allen might fall off a high surface. I like when Allen is being silly and some poor extra has to keep a straight face. The sequences at Luna's house

where Miles is pretending to be a robot or the start when Miles has just woken up. There he actually puts a pie in someone's face and no one breaks character. It's hilarious.

Allen really wanted to make this silent comedy. But he actually put in plenty of jokes that are not silent comedy jokes and they work great as well.

A lot of the the jokes are dripping with time travel irony. This kind of sci fi is always more about holding a mirror up to the present. Here, Allen is holding up one of those circus mirrors that makes the present look very strange. Like how the foods we thought were good for us is bad. Or the sequence where Miles tells the doctors about Stalin. It's not exactly the incredibly constructed witty one liners Allen is known for. They are jokes that only work in this context, but they are pretty funny verbal jokes anyway.

DR ORVA: Has he asked for anything special? DR MELICK: Yes. This morning for breakfast. He requested something called wheat germ, organic honey and tiger's milk. DR ORVA: Those are the charmed substances once felt to contain life-preserving properties. DR MELICK: You mean there was no deep fat? No steak or cream pies or hot fudge? DR ORVA: Those were thought to be unhealthy... the opposite of what we now know to be true.

Some of the references make sense in the early 70s but are probably dated today. Take for example Our Leader, who is portrayed in photos as TIMOTHY LEARY, one of the leaders of the counter culture in the 60s and 70s. He was a big proponent of LSD and the Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out way of life. It's hard to imagine Allen, who was really quite straight laced, would do anything but laugh at Leary. His time was the 70s and by the 80s the world passed him by. Right now, I imagine most people watching the film for the first time would miss the joke completely.

There's also references to Howard Cosell, Stalin, Playboy Magazine, Bill Graham and other stuff that just simply isn't relevant anymore. The Miss America sequence is dated as that competition has fallen away in the culture. This kind of stuff hurts the film, watching it today.

DR TRYON: At first we didn't know what this was, but we've developed a theory. We feel that when citizens in your society were guilty of a crime against the state, they were forced to watch this. MILES: Yes, that's exactly what that was.

Luckily, outside of those time locked references, there's no shortage of just pithy one liners. Once again we are in the world where Allen's character just says stuff and no one reacts to the weird stuff he's saying.

LUNA: It's hard to believe that you haven't had sex for 200 years. MILES: 204, if you count my marriage.

In amongst the jokes is an actual, proper story. The plot makes sense (the rebellion needs a blank person for their plans so they woke one up). Allen even writes set ups and pay offs. The robots are introduced in a scene that is not particularly funny, but Allen does it because he needs to use it later. Even the orgasmitron comes back as a plot point. It's simple stuff - but it's not just sketch after sketch anymore. SLEEPER has more of a plot - a beginning, middle and end. And some tension we are building towards.

But there's plenty of scenes that are just sketches that do nothing to advance the story. But then there are scenes that have no jokes at all and are there to just advance the story. In fact the film opens with five minutes of no jokes, just setting the scene.

Miles is yet another stock Woody Allen persona. But because he's in a better script and he's on this journey, he's not just a cartoon straight man in a series of sketches. We ever so slightly feel for him when he's lost in this future world, because he's genuinely stuck. And we are sad for him when he discovers his life is gone and that this big adventure rests of his shoulders. Miles is less of a loser than the characters Allen played before. He's even a little heroic.

MILES: For God's sakes, put yourself in my position. I'm a clarinet player in 1973. I go into the hospital for a lousy operation. I wake up 200 years later and I'm Flash Gordon. Plus I'm a criminal.

Luna, played by Diane Keaton, is the most developed secondary character Allen had written so far. Everyone else had just been cartoons, but she's a person with flaws and she learns and changes. She starts as a character who is happily ignorant, hating the rebels. Then she learns that the state isn't on her side, ultimately becoming a rebel herself. She starts as a character that our hero has to overcome, and our hero turns her into a character that will come back a believer who saves his life. I mean, it's kind of like Han Solo. This is classic, solid screenwriting stuff.

MILES: Who are you? LUNA: Who am I? I'm Luna. MILES: Who? LUNA: Luna. Don't you remember? We were outlaws, aliens. The police captured you. I escaped. I'm with the underground. Remember? The Western District? Miles, I'm Luna. Luna! Remember? Luna. MILES: Your name is not Luna, is it?

There's a pretty decent ending too. It's a heist - Luna and Miles have to steal a nose. Allen puts in some character tension - Miles is jealous of Erno, the leader of the revolution. It's good screenwriting as two things are on the line. They have to steal a nose, but our leads have to get along as well.

The tension in the end comes from seeing if our two leads can pull off the heist and put their bickering aside. I assume that there were jokes that Allen and Keaton had to go on, but they improvised as well. Allen had apparently planned a more intricate ending that involved stunts, but it wasn't practical. But it doesn't matter. Getting the nose and throwing it under a steam roller is a good way to end the revolution as any. Because what we want as viewers to see is whether Miles and Luna get together.

[]

Right at the end we get a little bit of theme wrapping. Miles says that any new regime will just be like the last. Between the revolution in BANANAS and the attempted killing of Napoleon in LOVE AND DEATH, Allen certainly had revolution on the brain. And he seems consistent with his view on power and authority - they're all the same in the end. It's very anti authoritarian in a way. But it's also very Woody Allen to not care about the matters of the world - there are bigger matters like love. Or it's another hangover of it's time. By now the 60s hippie dream had soured and the 70s was settling in.

[]

Production, cast and crew

Allen shot SLEEPER around Denver and nearby Boulder in Colorado, with some extra filming in Los Angeles. Los Angeles was the base for the production and planning, with most of the crew sourced from LA. There was no scenes in New York. And Allen had yet to decide that his home town would be his home base.

Allen basically went for locations that already looked futuristic, and for some reason several locations around Denver for the bill. I'm not sure why Denver was such a hub for modernist architecture, but it was. Allen had considered shooting in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil. Brasilia is still a modernist wonder of a city. Of course, it proved too expensive.

The most famous futuristic building is Luna's home, called Sculptured House, which a lot of people call Sleeper House. It's located on the outskirts of Denver and was only built ten years earlier and designed by modernist architect CHARLES DEATON. The house was unfinished at the time of filming and no one actually lived there full time until 2006, after it was bought and sold a few times. It looks amazing but several owners have spent millions each trying to get the house complete and comfortable for living.

The National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder serves as the base for the bad guys. It was designed by I.M. Pei, who also designed the famous pyramid at the Louvre in Paris. Some of the landmarks are still there, like The Boettcher Memorial Conservatory, but some are gone, like The Currigan Exhibition Hall. It's hard to predict the future.

There are some really wonderful cinematic shots of nature as well. Of course, landscapes are an easy way to look futuristic - trees, forests and caves haven't changed in millions of years.

In one of the early scenes, the sky is a lovely blue with the moon right in the middle of the frame. It's one of those shots you reckon everyone had to wait around for hours to get just right. It's a very different approach from Allen's first couple of films. In TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN and BANANAS, Allen prided himself on coming in on time and on budget. With SLEEPER he went the other way. He became more demanding of getting things to look right and taking the time it took for it to happen. There are lots of stories of the cast waiting around with nothing to do as it rained or snowed.

The other cause of delay was a lot of technical complications. The bubble cars would break down and there was a lot work to set up the stunts. L

Also adding to the production time was Allen's habit of shooting far more than he needed. Allen improvised jokes and filmed sequences that were funny that he didn't really have a place for. In the end, the shoot went for 101 days - the longest of his career to date, and he had 35 hours of footage to sort through. There were a lot of deleted scenes, and there are production photos of them. According to editor Ralph Rosenblum, a lot of very funny scenes were cut because they took away from the plot. It's Another small bit of growth in Allen's filmmaking. And also alludes to what would come next - Allen's perfectionism would only increase and he would ruthlessly rewrite and reshoot his films in the next decade or two.

[]

Also futuristic was the costumes, props and sets. The costumes are the work of costume designer JOEL SCHUMACHER. The look of the robot butlers in particular are incredible. The first theatrical poster used a shot of Allen in the jet pack, but after the film came out every DVD or blu-Ray release since always features Allen as a robot butler.

Schumacher would go on to be a director in his own right, but this was his first film with Allen and the two would become close friends outside of work. Allen actually encouraged Schumacher into directing and Schumacher has credited Allen for this. Schumacher went on to direct films like Falling Down and Batman And Robin.

[]

Returning as cinematographer was DAVID M WALSH, who worked on Allen's last film, EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX* (*BUT WE'RE AFRAID TO ASK). He does a pretty good job, and a marked improvement on his first couple of films. Allen had wanted to continue working with Walsh but he was unwilling to leave Los Angeles. Walsh would do fine, being the cinematographer for many excellent films including a run with director Herbert Ross that included classic like The Sunshine Boys and The Goodbye Girl.

Also returning is Dale Hennesey as production designer, who also worked on Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex. He created all the futuristic sets and the bubble cars. The wonderfully named AD FLOWERS created the special effects. He worked with Allen before on TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN and also worked on The Godfather. He created the slime, the explosions and other effects.

I love the way things are lit - and I assume Walsh, Hennesey and Flowers might have all contributed. The first time we see Sculptured House features it is all lit up beautifully, with a blue night sky behind it. The bubble cars light up. There's some cool light furniture. It's not practical but it looks very hip from a design point of view. And it hasn't dated too badly.

One of the more interesting shots is near the end where Miles and Luna make plans in a screening room and they are shot as shadows. Just overall, the film looks great, with lots of interesting ideas. They've certainly done a great job hiding the small production budget.

RALPH ROSENBLUM and Ron Kalish both return as editors - having worked on Allen's last few films. Basically Allen was starting his habit of working again with talented people instead of finding new people every time. He wouldn't be able to keep this team together, but that habit was forming.

[]

This is DIANE KEATON's first appearance in a Woody Allen film. But, of course, she had also worked with Allen before. The two met when they starred in Allen's PLAY IT AGAIN SAM on Broadway, and they reprised their roles in the 1972 film version, which Allen didn't direct, but did quite well in the box office. So a lot of people had already seen the two together onscreen, as a couple. But in real life, they were already not a couple by the time they were playing one in films. She would, of course, appear in Allen's next four films.

SLEEPER was only Keaton's third film ever. 1972's PLAY IT AGAIN SAM was the second. The first was THE GODFATHER, just a couple of months earlier in 1972. It's not a bad run for someone's first three films. And this is the first where she gets to be out and out funny. And she is very funny here.

Right away, the chemistry between Allen and Keaton is fantastic. She is more than his equal. There's that old Grace Kelly line about being able to do everything Fred Astaire can do, but backwards and in heels. That applies here.

Keaton can keep up with Allen's pace, improvise funny lines and not break character. And she manages to look radiant whilst doing it. We are drawn to her whenever the pair are onscreen.

Beyond the funny, Keaton shows remarkable range. She goes from physical comedy to spitting out one liners to doing a very funny Marlon Brando impression. Yet at other times she plays defeated, or sweet, or threatened, or exotic when she is Luna. Allen has written Luna as a character with a journey and some complexity. Keaton sells it all with grace. And she is the best actor to the grace an Allen film up to this point.

[]

Let's not forget Allen's acting either. He's great - he's charming when he needs to be and silly when he needs to be. He's got his slapstick work down pretty well, pulling some hilarious faces and funny prat falls. Like I said, there are parts where he almost seems heroic.

Allen and Keaton are pretty much in every scene once they are introduced. A couple of people get support billing, but it seems rather arbitrary why Mary Gregory, who plays Dr Melik, gets a big credit but Bartlett Robinson, Dr Orva, who gets more lines and scenes, doesn't. I assume Gregory has a better agent.

That supporting cast, like Gregory, Robinson and also John Beck, Don Keefer and many of the others are all hard working character actors. They are the kind of actors who appear in dozens of roles and are usually not tied up in long shoots. They are happy to appear in either TV shows or films and are usually based out of LA.

The supporting cast all do fine - but this was really the last time Allen would work with LA as his base. And Allen would stop getting readily available TV character actors for his minor roles - moving instead to out of work New York Theatre types. It's a small distinction, but you can see what Allen left behind with this film.

[]

Contrasting the futuristic setting is the music. Allen instead went back in time, to New Orleans jazz that was popular in the period between the world wars. It was a deliberate move by Allen to avoid synths and moogs and other futuristic sounds.

Woody Allen loves this New Orleans jazz, also known as Dixieland. He would use it throughout his films to come. He also, at this time, had recently started playing in a Dixieland band called The New Orleans Funeral and Ragtime Orchestra, blowing his clarinet most Monday nights at Michael's Pub in New York.

So he took his clarinet and travelled to New Orleans himself to record the soundtrack. For two days, and for \$12k, Allen hired the Preservation Hall Jazz Band to back him in a series of recordings. The legendary band featured George

Lewis, Allen's clarinet hero, who died in 1968. The Preservation Hall Jazz Band ran through a bunch of songs with Allen, and Allen took the recordings back to New York to put in his film. He also recorded some tracks with his regular band in New York, recording in Michael's pub.

The songs used were classics of New Orleans jazz. Wonderful songs like Canal Street Blues, which was first performed by King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, which featured a young Louis Armstrong (who gets a writing credit). There's also Ice Cream, a 20s novelty song that became a jazz standard performed by the Jim Robinson band that featured a young George Lewis. And Wolverine Blues that was written by Jelly Roll Morton. The film opens with T'aint Nobody's Biz-ness If I Do, which Allen would later reuse as a musical number in the Bullets Over Broadway musical.

All these songs serve to give a real pace to the film. The Preservation Hall Jazz Band play with a lot of energy, and that energy gets transferred onto the action on screen. There's no lyrics or singing in the score and functionally, the tracks are almost interchangeable. A lot of it used for the soundtrack of Allen running around. And it's great running around music.

Allen doing the music was something the people around him encouraged. It helped cement the idea that he was the new Charlie Chaplin - who also wrote, directed, starred and composed the music to his own films. Yet, for whatever reason a soundtrack was never released. There's a lot of great Woody Allen films where there was no soundtrack issued. If I had the chance to choose just one to finally see a release, it would be this one.

[]

The opening credits strike a similar tone to the famous credits sequence that Allen would use for 40 films. It's white text on black with music underneath. But the font was not the one he would ultimately settle on. And the order of names and how things are laid out would change. It's another sign that Allen was still working out what he wanted to be as a filmmaker. Watching it today - it's almost there. And that's true about a lot of this film. It's almost there.

Release and reception

SLEEPER was released on 17 December 1973 in the US by United Artists. It was Allen's third film for United Artists, who would sign Allen to another three picture deal with full creative control. He would make four more films for United Artists after SLEEPER.

It was another hit for Allen, much like all his early comedies. It fits in well with other great comedies of the 70s like The Life Of Brian, MASH, A New Leaf or Blazing Saddles. All had good stories - and they make the comedy better

because of it. It's like how Weird Al Yankovic is funnier because the songs are so good and the musicianship is so good.

For me, out of the five early funny ones, this is the best one. There's a path here for Allen to make comedies that also dealt with his bigger concerns about life and philosophy and meaning. And he could make a film that looked pretty good - a real cinematic spectacle. That high concept comedy with big ideas would continue into his next film LOVE AND DEATH. And then he would abandon it after Annie Hall.

Of the early funny ones, those first five Woody Allen films - for me this is the best. It's even a bit unfair to compare those five films. It's more like three early, sketch comedy ones and then two not as early comedy adventures in Sleeper and Love And Death. And I'm sure everyone around Allen - his managers, his studio, etc would have loved to have Woody continue making these comedy adventures, with big set pieces and just enough romance to get by. His audience would have probably loved it too. But of course, Allen would go on to do more than that.

I think this film gets unfairly overshadowed by the work Allen did later. It's as good as any of Mel Brooks' early work. And in a way, the concept is strong and the visuals are strong and the basic story is strong - that this could easily be a musical the way Brooks turns his early films into musicals. There should be more memes and people should quote this film more. Instead Allen's own film a year habit means that some of his best work gets buried.

The story is the bit that stands up best. I love Miles and Luna, this wonderful odd couple of the man out of time and the woman out of her comfort. And there's just plenty of laughs along the way. But it's full of dates references and we know the genius work that will come. It's fine, it works, it's enjoyable. But it doesn't change the course of cinema. It's a tough bar, sure. But it's those small things that nag at me watching the film now.

In the story of Allen's career, he is really making his mark. He gets to do the clever philosophical stuff - having stabs at popular culture. Whilst being at the top of his joke game. He writes, he directs, he stars and he composes. It's pretty incredible how much showing off he's doing. And United Artists were telling anyone who would listen that he was a one of a kind genius.

That genius is really starting to show here - but it's just not there yet. Still - he had been funny before, but for me, this is Woody Allen's first great film.

[]

Fun Facts

Here's some fun facts about SLEEPER.

Notably, the voice of the evil computer is Douglas Rain, who played the voice of the evil computer in 2001: A Space Odyssey. Also in the voice cast are two great Jewish comedians - Myron Cohen and Jackie Mason - who are the voices of the Jewish robot tailors.

The engineer and recorder on the Preservation Hall sessions was a young Phil Ramone. Ramone would go on to be a legendary record producer, making hit albums for Billy Joel, Paul Simon and many others. But he started and a recordist for films and had worked on Casino Royale which also starred Allen.

The name of this film was used by a British band in the 90s for their band name. Sleeper are a great band - I particularly love their first two albums - great crunchy Brit pop with edge and some clever cheeky lyrics to boot. They did a cover of Blondie's Atomic on the Trainspotting soundtrack. As far as I can think of they are the only band to take their name as a Woody Allen reference. Although if you know another I'm happy to be proven wrong.

Outro

Thanks for listening to the Woody Allen Pages Podcast.

What do you think of Sleeper? Or this episode. Do you agree or disagree? Send me an email or contact me on social media. I'm at woodyallenpages at Gmail dot com and at woodyallenpages on most socials. The best feedback and questions will go into a special episode.

As usual, go check out Woody Allen Pages . Com. The site is 10 years old now and is the most comprehensive guide to Allen's work online.

You can support the website and the podcast and myself by supporting me on Patreon. Patreon.com slash woodyallenpages - links are in the description. You get some goodies and you help me. Some of our top supporters also get a shout out in the podcast.

If you want to know more about Woody Allen's work, I suggest my books. Three volumes called the Woody Allen Film guides that tell the story of every Allen film. This podcast is pretty nerdy, but the books are intensely nerdy and detailed.

Otherwise, just spread the word. Tell a friend. We have to keep the conversation and Allen's work alive. It's the most important thing, and why this podcast exists.

Next week - we look at one of Allen's most ambitious films, with a huge cast.