

MISS CAMP AMERICA



at least once and one almost fell on the stairs.

It was Harlow they finally chose, of course. It was fitting: 'she' best symbolised the whole Camp clan's ideal of womanhood. But while everyone waited for the winner to be announced, Jack Dorowshow, Chairman of the Board of producers of the contest, acted as MC in the person of "The Flawless Sabrina".

"The Flawless Sabrina" kept trying to get through to the audience while all along they KNEW he was really putting them on, saying things like: "Remember, the boys take contests like these very seriously. They come here from all parts of the country, get up on this stage and endure the pain of corsets, high heels, false eyelashes, for the opportunity to be chosen 'the winner'. Only one of them can win, but all of them deserve your understanding and appreciation". To illustrate what he meant, Sabrina sang a song called "The Joker". The joker turned out to be one who feels he is laughing with a crowd when he suddenly realises that it is he whom everyone is laughing AT. He ended the song with the line "the Joker is we". I looked at the program notes in my lap. They included a quote from George Washington, saying "...Do not express joy before one who is sick or in pain, for that contrary passion will aggravate his misery. Scoff at none, although they give occasion."

It was a plea for pity and compassion. But then, I realised, that was what had brought all the contestants there in the first place; it wasn't Camp at all.

by Lorraine Glennby

There ought not to be any mystique, aura of glamor, or charming fun about Camp, for at bottom what Camp consists in is the exploitation of human unhappiness for the enjoyment of others. Although the dynamics of Camp are often subtle anyone who cares to look closely at its various forms will find in them the essential quality of a cruel practical joke.

I was present at Town Hall on Feb. 20th, along with Andy Warhol, Larry Rivers, Edie Sedgewick, BabyJane Holzer, et al to see "The Miss All-American Camp Beauty Pageant". Translated, this was meant to be a parody of the Miss America contest, using the Camp Apostles as part of a panel of judges to select a winner from a group of drag queens on the basis of their ability to disguise themselves as women. Since the Miss America sponsors threatened to sue if this title was used, the Camp followers came up with the above. But they got back at their detractors -- and the promoters who put them there in the first place -- by singing a song one of them had written. It began:

"American mothers, here your sons are
All dressed up in your best dresses..."

The contest began with a lineup of all the "Queens" in bathing suits. They were to be judged on the basis of such points as most effective concealment of the penis and 'projection'. One by one, as their name was called, they paraded for the onlookers, trying to walk gracefully in high heels and at the same time to 'project' some image which would single them out from all the rest. They tried mouthing "thanks, thank

you" and smiling, lowering eyelids and opening wet lips. The judges sat back digging, amused, approving. This was Camp, the empire they created, their message of art and freedom to the new world.

The message was - Torture, created in their own image. After the contestants had reappeared in gowns and gone through the same routine, they were narrowed down to five finalists who were put on display before the closed velvet curtain. The judges couldn't make up their minds; they wanted to hear the contestants talk, be clever. They asked them all the same question: "What will you do with the MONEY (\$1500) if you win?" One of them answered: "I'd use it for mothers' education". Everyone laughed. Then one of the judges got a good idea--have each one of them walk, separately, down the stairs to the aisle without knowing why. Keep em in suspense. There was a movie camera rolling, they could really Camp it up for the camera. "Will number two contestant please step forward and walk down the stairs", a voice intoned over the microphone. Number two jerked forward: what? do what? he whispered to the MC, half-realising he was almost chosen, that it all might depend on how well he did this one bit. This was "Harlow", just-turned-nineteen year old drag queen, thin, skin and hair and dress all tinged a pale bluepurple, looking like Nico only animated with the excitement of tension and the desire to please. Harlow worked so well the judges had all four others do the stairs bit. One of them, "Miss Crystal", did an unintentional parody of Gloria Swanson's exit scene in "Sunset Boulevard". All of them tripped

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