

RETURN OF SINEAD

The new Neil Jordan movie, "The Butcher Boy," scheduled to open in select theaters on April 3, features Irish lout Sinead O'Connor. The singer-actress-bigot plays the role of the Virgin Mary, making a spectacle of herself for uttering vulgarities. She recently told reporters, "I tend to think that if Mary was around now she might say something like f-!" That's one good reason why she shouldn't try to think.

Playing Mary as a foul-mouthed troublemaker is vintage Sinead. She is the same person who tore up a picture of the pope on "Saturday Night Live" in 1990. Her role in "The Butcher Boy" adds to her resume: in a vision seen by a teen-ager, Sinead appears as the Virgin Mary, instructing the kid to go on a murder spree, complete with four-letter words.

One internet movie reviewer, "Frank's 500," said the film "is bizarre, often splendidly surreal, steeped in cynicism and anti-clericalism." That's why he likes it. He even praises Neil Jordan for "casting Sinead O'Connor as the Virgin Mary whose use of the 'F-word' might well, I would have thought, land him in even more trouble with the Catholic Church..." Then, in a sentence that is as dishonest as it is revealing, he writes, "Regrettably, however, the line works perfectly in context of the narrative and is one of the many elements that help make this bizarre and often splendidly surreal fable superbly entertaining."

We await the day when a movie that disparages Catholicism will be beaten up by the reviewers. But from the looks of things, it'll take a miracle of sorts before this happens.