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'Men in Tights' / 'Where Are We?'

Laughter and Gloom

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Film

In *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*, Mel Brooks returns to the truly wild and mad-cap filmmaking that marked such earlier successes as *The Producers*, *Young Frankenstein* and *Blazing Saddles*. Sight gags, outrageous puns and one-liners provide more than enough groans and grins from start to finish. Everything but the kitchen sink, and maybe that, too, are thrown in. The cast is fine, including Carey Elwes as Robin Hood and Roger Rees as the Sheriff of Nottingham, Brooks himself as Rabbi Tucker, Tracey Ullman as Latrine (a sorceress of



Tracey Ullman as Latrine and Richard Lewis as Prince John in Mel Brooks' *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*.

sorts) and Richard Lewis as a neurotic King John.

Musical numbers include "Men in Tights," which is not quite in the same Reich with "Springtime for Hitler," but what is? There is also rap, camel jockeys, king fu and *Playboy* in braille. Some gags fall flat, but on the whole we found it a welcome, goofy summertime comedy.

Where Are We? is a touching home movie shot over an 18-day cross-country trip by co-directors Jeffrey Friedman and Academy Award-winning filmmaker Rob Epstein (*Word is Out*). The directors call their film a "snapshot" of the American South and Southwest. It is their device to ask subjects at the various stops along the way, "Where Are We?," eliciting feelings about their home and about themselves. The edited product accumulates sentiments of longing, sadness, even desolation.

In contrast to the recently released *Road Scholar*, this road film offers little humor. The prevailing attitude is disappointment with America. It should be noted that the film was shot just after the 1991 Desert Storm operation. The subjects interviewed seem consistently wearied by the weight of daily life. Yet, despite their gloom, the subjects — from gays in the military to impoverished African-Americans — manage to muster a measure of grit, for the camera at least. ■