

FUNNY AS HEIL!

As 'The Producers' comes to the big screen, comic genius Mel Brooks gives a brief master class in what makes funny funny. (Hint: Start with Broderick and Lane)

JOKES DO WORK BETTER in tandem, and these two are perfect together. One is pastel and shy, and the other is shameless and absolutely bizarre. And the way they're physically opposite has something to do with their dynamic, too. But with them, there's no outdoing each other. They both reach the mark evenly, like a pair of beautiful, shiny black trotters. They've got the same rhythm, the same pace, and the same joy. It's a great happiness they're experiencing, a great love. I don't think we'll ever see another pair like them.

For the movie, we thought of nobody else. Hollywood always says, "Hey, how does Clark Gable sound for Leo Bloom?" And we'll say, "Oh, Clark Gable is dead." And they'll say, "Oh? How about Cary Grant?" And we'll say, "He's dead, too." They'll suggest John Wayne. And we'll say, "No, that won't do." Then they'll break out with, "Well, what about the two Toms?" That's Hollywood: "Tom Hanks is Bialystock and Tom Cruise is Leo Bloom. Two Toms!" I'm sure they wanted that for the movie, but we said, "We don't do the movie unless the guys who did the show play their parts again."

You know, these guys aren't just doing shtick. A lot of people, for want of a better term, say *shtick*, and I always say, Is it Einstein with that $E = mc^2$ shtick? What is that? Are you kidding? Is it Kierkegaard, that idiot Kierkegaard, with that *Fear and Trembling* shtick? And what about Nietzsche with that "If it doesn't kill you, it will make you stronger" shtick? So stop with the shtick, because with these guys comedy is actually an art.

—AS TOLD TO HOWIE KAHN

