



Male contestants await judging. (Trib photos by Richard Derk)

Beauty contest turns the tables

only reaching out to touch men they knew. Farrell cautioned the women who were willing to pinch a little flesh to be gentle, since he said everyone knows beauty contestants are virgins.

The bathing suit competition was followed by a simulation of those questions of earth-shattering moral import that beauty contestants are always asked. The "boys" weren't properly serious about this segment, though — one was asked what he would do if he suddenly found his and his wife's careers in conflict (she a well-established corporation president; he a secretary with a chance for advancement in another city). After thinking for a moment, he said, "I guess I'd turn to drugs."

For two solid hours, the double entendres, innuendoes, and generally raunchy talk flew until Grennan, his freckled-ingenue good looks covered only by a tattered pair of cutoffs and his moustache, emerged the overwhelming choice of the crowd. The only fault the audience could find with his body was that a few women thought he needed a suntan.

Farrell's point in acting out the "sex object" role reversal was to demonstrate that everybody is dehumanized when individuals are treated "like a piece of meat."

Farrell said that women's liberation needs to be expanded to become "human liberation." The negative image that has been projected by society onto women as passive and emotional, Farrell said, "has prevented men from getting in touch with the feminine parts of our personalities. People think now of liberated women coming up to where men are, as though the values of the male role are still somehow better. A man will say with some pride, 'My girl is a real tomboy,' but nobody says, 'Look at my boy, I'm really proud of him, he's a sissy.'"

Farrell isn't advocating putting men into dresses, though. What he is advocating is basing sexual identity on something a little more fundamental than the kinds of trappings and roles that have trapped the sexes and isolated them from each other.

The traditional view of men has forced them into the role of breadwinner, whether they want to be, Farrell said, and has often stripped men of their ideals and their dreams in the name of earning a living. By the same token, women have been judged on their physical characteristics to the point where "every woman is in a beauty contest every day of her life," Farrell said.

The men involved in Tuesday's contest obviously weren't used to baring their bodies in front of a roomful of probing eyes. They stood self-consciously at the front of the stage, some of them with their hands folded in front of them to shield as much as possible, sneaking looks at their own bodies and side-long glances at the bodies next to them, while the women



One contestant gets a closer check.



Members of the audience express a few opinions on the contestants.

in the audience critiqued the finalists out loud, one by one. And there was, after all, only one winner.

Grennan, interviewed after the contest, was properly self-effacing about his victory. He said that a lot of his friends had been among the women in the audience and he attributed his victory to the fact that "I guess I sort of had the house packed."

Grennan said it was fun to win a contest, even one that was as much a farce as this one. It topped off a good week, one in which he learned he had won a scholarship to Northwestern University in Evanston, he said.

Asked how he thought it would have felt to have been among the legion of "boys" who were rejected by the audience as not being physically attractive enough even to be a finalist, Grennan winced just a bit.

"Yeah," he said, running his hand across his chest, "that would have been pretty castrating, all right."