



**CERTAINLY NOT GANG WARFARE:** (L-R) Stuart Hughes, Martha Irvina, David Marr, Patricia Vanstone, Beth Ann Cole, Greg Spottiswood and Neil Foster in Factory Theatre Productions *Girl in the Gang*.

## Girls in the Gang miss mark

By LAUREN GILLEN

A high-profile theatre and good publicity can do a lot to raise one's hope of an exciting evening. There are, however, those occasions when all the publicity in the world cannot help a play that simply misses the mark. *Girls in the Gang*, directed by Raymond Storey and Jackie Maxwell, is one such play.

*Girls in the Gang*, now running at the Factory Theatre, centres around the women of the Boyd Gang, a Toronto-based group of gangsters who dominated crime in the late '40s and early '50s. It is a story Doreen Boyd, Ann Jackson, Mary Mitchell, and Anna Bosnich—the women who fell in love, aided, and abetted these notorious gangsters as they pulled off some of the greatest Canadian robberies of their time.

As innovative as it is to create a comedy-musical depicting the Boyd Gang saga from these women's point

of view, the play lacks dramatic action. In an attempt to strengthen a weak lot and supplement predictable humour, the gangsters come out, wake the audience with a couple of machine-gun rounds, and sing some song that is all-too-often muffled by an over-zealous, live band. But even these theatrics could not save a play that does very little to endear us to any of the four female characters who are the supposed focal point of the evening.

Despite all the attention given to these women, the only truly exciting or comedic moments belong to the men of the Boyd Gang. Their incredibly athletic robberies and jailbreaks are fast-paced, and performed with ease, style and charm.

*Girls in the Gang* was written by Storey and John Roby. Unfortunately, though, the male characters easily overshadowed the women in every aspect of the plot. The women

become little more than a nagging nuisance in the two-and-a-half hour show. What makes this so disheartening is that all of the actors and actresses are obviously talented but simply cannot overcome the weaknesses inherent in the script.

Edwin Alonzo Boyd (Neil Foster), Lennie Jackson (Stuart Hughes), Willie "the clown" Jackson (Greg Spottiswood) and Valient Lesso, alias "Steve Suchan" (David Marr) got most of our attention despite their smaller roles.

John Roby's music does little more than add a few energetic bars of jazz-like trumpet, creating a bad imitation of the '40s sound, and many of Storey's lyrics are equally uncreative.

*Girls in the Gang* at the Factory Theatre does little more than show a boring side to what obviously was a vibrant, violent time in Toronto's post-world war history.

## Another baby?! AHHHHH!!!!

By NORMAN WILNER

In recent months, Hollywood has been inundated with infants. Everyone has one. Or two. And sometimes even five. Sometimes, more than one parent has one. Sometimes it's a single parent. And sometimes, the parents even become their children. This infant trend is disgusting, annoying, and has got to stop.

There's a new film out now called *vice-versa*, in which a father changes bodies with his 11-year-old son. And a similar film, . . . *big*, starring Tom Hanks, comes out in a few months. If anyone here notices a pronounced resemblance to a Dudley Moore/Kirk Cameron pictured called *Like Father, Like Son*, don't panic. It's just Hollywood in one of its phases. Yes, the basic plots of all three films—and even some of the jokes—are the same. In fact, the obsession with body-swapping dates back to the 1970s, and a Disney picture called *Freaky Friday*, in which Barbara Harris and Jodie Foster switched bodies for a day.

But the worst thing about these films are the babies. They're everywhere. And, as usual, it's all the fault of the French.

About a year or so back, a film called *Three Men and a Cradle* made the rounds at the Carlton and Canada Square art-house theatres. It was the simple story of three bachelors

who ended up domestics because of a baby left on their doorstep. The English-language rights were immediately grabbed by Disney Productions' Touchstone Pictures, which organized a Leonard-Nimoy-directed laff riot with Tom Selleck, Ted Danson and Steve Guttenberg as the three men, and two little girls as the baby.

The film was retitled *Three Men and a Baby*, presumably because American audiences wouldn't know what the cradle had to do with anything. At any rate, Nimoy's film is one of the most inane in recent years. It works on the belief that if the baby cries loud enough, and the actors look silly enough, and the audience coos, "Aw, cuuuute!" loud enough, then the dialogue and action will become unimportant. With that credo firmly in hand, *Three Men and a Baby* marches on to take theatres by storm . . . and make many millions of dollars at the box office.

On the other hand, *Raising Arizona*, the intelligent, riotously funny piece of rural Americana released in early 1987, qualifies as the first of the new wave of baby movies. Directed, produced and written by Joel and Ethan Coen, *Raising Arizona* is a great companion piece to their earlier effort, the ultra-film noir *Blood Simple*, but it must also take some of the blame for this baby nonsense.

Once the trend was established, babies were everywhere. Diane Keaton had one in *Baby Boom*, Steve

Martin went home to one in *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*, Kevin Bacon and Elizabeth McGovern found one in *She's Having a Baby*, and Dennis Quaid discovered his child *in utero* in a most touching scene in *Innerspace*. Face it: the little buggers are everywhere.

And it hasn't stopped yet. Babies continue to crawl, toddle or creep towards our theatre with ever-increasing frequency. Horror films must be just around the corner: *Omen IV: Three Men and the Antichrist!* At this rate, babies will be in every theatre across the country, perhaps across the world. And so I beg of you: turn away. The next time you see a poster, look for an infant. Look *closely*: sometimes they hide. If you see one, turn away. Go see something healthy, like *Surf Nazis Must Die*. Or something encouraging, like *Frantic*, an excellent suspense picture with Harrison Ford, and nary a tyke in sight. Please do this for me. Hell, do it for the human race, because sooner or later people are going to realize that it's cheaper and easier to see a movie about a baby than to have a baby yourself. This is not an idle threat: it could easily become reality.

So, for the sake of the continuation of our species, and indeed of life on Earth itself, please stop seeing baby movies.

I, Norman Wilner, thank you. And the world thanks you, too.

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