

# arts

## Dramatist returns

by Beno John

Last Thursday Canadian playwright John Hebert gave a reading in the Fine Arts bldg. His *Fortune and Men's Eyes* has been produced in 14 different countries. This particular play has been translated into eight languages, and has won the dramatist more acclaim in Europe than he has in Canada.

Herbert chose to read his play *Dinosaur* which is a searing indictment of the contemporary Canadian dramatic scene which in its insecurity imports foreign talent and drives talented Canadian artists to foreign countries.

The play is built entirely on dialogue, and involves two characters; an aging starlet who has returned to Canada after making it big abroad, and an influential Canadian drama critic who destroyed the starlet's career in Canada with his malicious reviews. The critic embodies the condition of the elusive 'Canadian culture,' almost in a cliched sense, but in spite of this Herbert manages to vent his well-founded hostilities against the critics who rejected him at first, forcing Herbert to pursue his career elsewhere. The play also deals with the hostility that Canadian talents receive

upon returning to Canada, which is a 'nya nya, come back to Canada 'cuz ya didn't really make it big down there, didja?', sort of thing.

But Canadian culture and its critics have long been insecure about what they have had to offer the world. This underlying feeling is characterized by the bureaucratic pettiness of government funded national companies who as a rule include foreign works — rather than concentrating on a large untapped reservoir of Canadian work. Herbert clarified this point by elaborating on foreign audience's reaction to the productions of touring Canadian companies. "Foreign audiences don't want to see Canadian theatre companies doing Shakespeare, when the English can do it themselves and in most cases far better. They would much rather see something that is uniquely ours." Herbert pointed out the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's success in Europe as an affirmation of what he believes. *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* was immensely successful because the audiences were offered an insight into an experience that is uniquely Canadian. Our National Ballet, funded by government money, doesn't command as much popularity as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet for solely that reason."

Herbert noted a bit cynically that the Royal Winnipeg Ballet had to turn down a special invitation from the Queen to perform in London, because of a lack of adequate funding. He felt that the people really deserving recognition were many times the ones not given enough attention by the government.

John Herbert offered his audience a healthy combination of intelligence and experience, a combination which will continue to put him foremost in the contemporary Canadian dramatic scene.



photo Beno John

John Herbert, playwright: "Foreign audiences would much rather see something that is uniquely ours."



Eddie Bracken plays a fake military hero in *Hail the Conquering Hero*. The 1945 comedy will be shown Nov. 15, 7 p.m. Tory Lecture Theatre, U of A. Series tickets at Woodward's HUB and at the door. An Edmonton Film Society presentation.

## dirty liner

by Gordon Turtle

Last week I was discussing Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, and we found that their album *4 Way* was far and away the finest live album ever recorded. Time now to discuss what made that album so brilliant.

*4 Way Street* contained very little new material, so, in order for the album to surpass previous C.S.N. & Y records, the arrangements of the old material had to be better than the originals. And most of them were, the superlative efforts being *Southern man*, *Cowgirl in the Sand*, *Long Time Gone* and *Pre-Road Downs*. The vocal power of David Crosby emerges especially well on this live album. Crosby, I feel, was the soul of the band, and his three contributions to the album are the most genuinely felt, and honestly written songs there.

But, the fact remains that almost all of the material is old. It stays unique though, because a lot of the songs were previously done by the members' former

bands; *Southern Man*, *Don't Bring You Down* and *For What It's Worth* appeared for the first time in their new forms on *4 Way Street*.

The complexity of the band's musical arrangements highlights their supremacy in American rock. The winding electric guitar breaks of Neil Young, the thrashing piano of Stills, and the subtle acoustic work of Crosby and Nash, and, of course, the stunning four-part harmonies combine to provide a full and sound not to be heard by many (if any) current pop rock bands in the U.S.A. The fact that a band can be so cohesive and together at a live performance is indicative of each musician's capabilities. Who fans take note: C.S.N. & Y were the best combination of their time.

Neil Young's *Southern Man* is perhaps the best, (but certainly not the only) example of the band's musicianship. A darn long version of a comparatively short song is always a business for a group, yet C.S.N. & Y manage it beautifully. Powerful, if not breath-taking, coupled with a strong and steady rhythm section provide the band for a fine complementary lead guitar instrumental. The technique of dual guitars, practiced by the group, had never been tried to such an extent by an American band, and their experimentation turned out to be wild, brilliant success.

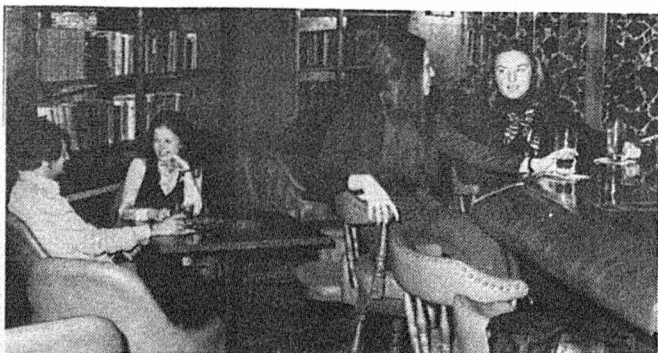
Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young did a concert a summer ago, that, though successful, was termed by some "Crosby, Stills, Cash, and Young concert," as the tour was strictly for money. It is definitely unfair to rate Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young by the work they are doing now, in the same way that it is unfair to rate Paul McCartney's contribution to the Beatles by his current pop career. Let us for a moment forget the present, and remember the past. And American rock past can not be remembered without an appreciation of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. Meanwhile, the trivia contest continues:

1. Who recorded the hit song "Bend Me, Shape Me?"
2. What band, and a very successful band it is, did the hit "Rufus" originate from?
3. What Edmonton band had the hit "Diamonds and Gold?"

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