

Shelley or The Idealist a near miss**Shelley - competent, well produced**

By BRIAN PEARL

Out of the formless void comes... a play. Shelley or The Idealist returns to haunt us with the spectre of yet another failed revolutionary, living futilely in self-imposed exile. What does this idealism mean, exiled from reality by romanticism? Who is he talking to? And how does he make his voice do that?

Toronto Workshop Production play, Shelley or The Idealist is an intelligent, fairly well-written piece which showed a lot of technical imagination on the parts of the playwright and the players. But the whole thing leaves the audience with too many questions raised and left unanswered.

The beauty of a play about the life of Shelley, the English romantic poet and social revolutionary is that it encompasses in one character the best example of passion and reason operating simultaneously. Shelley lived in exile as much because of his fiery nature as his rational rejection of English society (and their natural rejection of him, as well). Many elements of modern drama are all laid bare in the biography, all that is necessary is a playwright with the talent of a Shakespeare to make the audience see the tragedy of Shelley's exciting self-contradictions.

For some obscure reason,

playwrights with the abilities of a Shakespeare are rare. Ann Jellicoe, who also wrote The Knack and The Sport of My Mad Mother, may have felt that the story was a natural success on stage, but she failed to realize that a story that implies so much requires all the art of a master to fully expose and clearly draw out the significance. Or, as any abstract artist will tell you, it's really hard to be direct and simple.

The material of Shelley's life is provocative stage material, but the play's major misfortune is that provocation is the only goal, instead of excitement of revelation through dramatic art. The play is, in short, unsatisfying and disappointing.

It is also an unfortunate fact that Toronto Workshop has, in Shelley one of the most competent and well-produced shows of the year. The surrealistic technique is striking; an effective device that maintained Shelley's egocentric nature within the framework of a third-person, posthumous biography complete with author.

The players are all good. Barry Flatman as Shelley carries the play with enthusiasm and some small grace, though he does lack the necessary subtlety. Dianne Grant plays a sensitive and appealing Mary Wolstencraft, but she becomes too pathetic too quickly at play's end. All the actors except Flatman get to switch role during



The cast of Shelley or The Idealist.

the play, including Ray Wheelan who cutely played General Utility, which was everything from a crying baby to a Cathedral. The problem with role-switching was that George Luscombe, the director, and his small cast all remembered their greatest suc-

cess The Chicago Conspiracy Trial with a little too much fondness. The unconscious echoes of the prior production were a misfortune, because the director and cast discovered an out-of-context enthusiasm and ego-tripped all over Jellicoe's victimized play.

All these so-called faults are the product of success, not failure. The intelligence of the production makes these small failings stand out with uncomfortable starkness. A near miss always seems more of a shame than a shot that goes wide.

Soft Machine is too good to be ignored

By STEVE DAVEY

Third Soft Machine (Columbia) Three years ago Jimi Hendrix gave his Toronto debut with an obscure trio named after a Burrough's novel, the Soft Machine. The crowd loved Hendrix and his startling acrobatics, but the Softs were much disliked. Backed by a simplistic light show, their music was also very basic. Lacking guitar, the bassist and drummer laid a foundation for the organist to rocket from. Disregarding the standard Hammond, he played a small home organ through sixteen amplifiers, which gave an eerie electronic tone to their music.

Now with the addition of Elton Dean's alto sax, Soft Machine have released their third L.P. entitled Third. Each side of this double album features one song running about twenty minutes. All are intricate pieces that are deceptively free-form. Organist Michael Ratledge is laying down some intriguing sounds, layering jazz, classics, and electronics. Hopefully, the buying public will pick-up on the Softs. Their music is just too good to be ignored for another three years.

Nantucket Sleighride Mountain (Quality) Leslie West in sheer bulk alone is the heaviest guitarist in rock today. Tipping those scales at three hundred pounds, West's prowess is solely on the scales. As live performances will attest, Mountain fall flat on their face. Nantucket is boring and trivial. Bassist and producer Felix Papilardi has tried to revive that old Cream magic by vainly imitating Jack Bruce. Organist Steve Knight is non-existent and drummer Corky Laing's greatest skill lies in his ability to throw his drum sticks in the air. Mountain's "heaviness" is a crashing bore.

Loaded the Velvet Underground (Atlantic) The Velvet Underground? Oh, Andy Warhol's group with that weird girl singer Nico and Plastic Inevitable and Heroin, right? Well, no. Times have changed (hmmm) and so

have the Velvet Underground. Renowned for their forays in to American society, Lou Reed, their guiding spirit, has moved his associates into the rock and roll field. Remember the Pop Festival? The Velvets played to yawns and were remembered solely for drummer Maureen Tucker's lack of drums (she chunka-chunka'ed on a timpani). On Loaded Maureen uses a full set and even solos at one point! The Underground have improved greatly, having rocked into high gear, and who knows, perhaps they'll get us dancing again! Everybody Shing-a-ling...

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Having been told that this our last edition, I feel that it is only right that I acknowledge certain people here at York, who unknowingly or not, have contributed greatly to our musical community.

They are:

a) to the anonymous soul in Vanier Residence who blasts us each day with the profundity of the Moody Blues, a copy of the Moodys new L.P. What Does God Look Like

b) to Radio York an interview with the Iron Butterfly in which Steve Harris will confess that In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida is the greatest work of the century.

c) to the Guess Who fifteen hundred copies of American Woman autographed by Mike Fletcher and a bacon and tomato, skip the mayo, to go.

d) to York's numerous coffee houses and juke boxes, the words to Neil Young's Only Love Can Break Your Heart.

e) to those zany cut-ups at the Seer a life-time membership in the Columbia Record Club; a copy of Get a Job by the Silhouettes, and a Kleenex once used by Melanie (honest!).

f) and finally, to Howard Halpern, whom I predict for superstardom, a copy of every Elton John album and a good press agent.



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