

films

Night Games (at the Garneau) is another Swedish import, which indicates that there might yet be hope for the Alberta Censorship Board.

In many ways, it is like *Dear John*, which was here last year. Both escaped the banality which traditionally characterizes the love story (as seen in *A Man and a Woman*) by a neoteric treatment of the subject.

But *Night Games* has perfected many of the experimental terms of expression, and is a more polished production. While the use of the flashback in the former often appeared only to distract attention from the weakness in the story, it is used more effectively in this film to comment on and enforce the present action.

Besides this experimentation in time shifts, the movie explores many other technical facets of the cinematic art. The director has made full use of lighting effects and inventive camera positions in the medium of black and white film to strengthen the symbolism in the story. These effects are well controlled and appear as intrinsic modes of expression rather than artistic innovations. It is an impressive assertion of the film as an art in itself, proving it has an ability of expression outside that of any other artistic media.

The time shifts back about twenty years to the dolorous love relationship between a boy and his mother, which explains the present troubles of the grown man in his pursuit of love. Sufficient orientation to the terms of the movie are given at the outset in a series of Jekyll-Hyde transformations between the past and present.

John's family were members of the upper class, living in a huge mansion. (I must admit that, among other things, their exact social position escaped me.) It is tempting to give a descriptive explanation of the infertility and death symbolism of the house, but, unfortunately, the film does such an expert job that this is unnecessary.

It is to this house that John brings his fiancée, Marianne (Ingrid Thilen), who is the image of his mother. Once we are presumably conditioned to the time changes, the psychological implications of this similarity are fused with the technical aspects of the production as the camera starts a sequence on her, and leaves the audience guessing for a time whether the action is in the present or the past. Relevant flashes of his childhood in this mansion are skilfully juxtaposed to the present in this manner, with impressive results.

His mother is a selfish, complaining woman who appears bitterly vituperating with her husband or constantly chastising the servile, repulsive group of parasitic dilettantes which surrounds her, demanding flattery from them but never condescending to it. She reacts to the stillborn birth of her second child with a sardonic laugh. She wants love from John, but none of the inconvenience which this would impose, and she rejects his repeated attempts to win her affection.

As seen through the black and white vision of the child perceiving these past actions, John's aunt appears as a semi-neurotic individual who makes candid and rational comments on his mother in the games she plays with him.

These games consists of such activities as building a paper model of their house, then gleefully setting fire to it, and watching it burn to the floor. They hold a mock burial of John's mother, with candles and great solemnity, dumping an empty trunk into the cistern.

This neurotic past arouses pity for the nauseous adult John has become. His impotence in his conubial bed is countered by the antics of the same repulsive pedants (who seem to have been inherited with the house) who present a pompous home-movie satirizing the scene in the bedroom above.

It is from this symbol of infertility and death which he must escape, in order to become a man, and in order to be able to love. He must destroy the image of his mother in his past, and the image of his mother in his wife.

It is the poetic handling of the symbolism which turns a potentially trite story into a good film. Like all good poetry, it invokes a subjective response, and therefore everything that has been said about it can be disregarded, with the fortuitous exception of the recommendation to see it.

—Gordon Auck

Canadiana display is disappointing — one can't see the people for the trees

As I recall, when Tom Thomson so prematurely drowned, his body was never recovered.

Appropriate, one feels, after wandering through the exhibit of vaguely Group-of-Seven Canadian paintings in the new SUB's pleasant Gallery—appropriate because there's scarcely a body to be seen in these landscapes.

If a body does sneak in, as a little girl does in Morrice's "Girl on Roadside", it's so dissolved into the woody background as to become an odd sort of stain on the grass, and little more.

Why it was necessary to get the human figure out of Canadian

painting for a while is, I suppose, illustrated in an untypical Tom Thomson, "The Fisherman". Against the obligatory Canadian Shield rockface stands a figure straight out of a pre-World War I Saturday Evening Post.

It must have seemed impossible at that time to find ways of treating the figure that wouldn't look sissy and European against the sublime swirly lines of the trees and the rocks and the lakes and the sky and back to the trees . . .

Now that the woody mystique is pretty well kaput, most of the paintings in this exhibition are rather dull.

They look cramped and cluttered, as if executed with cold fingers and not enough canvas.

There is an Emily Carr, whom I find more and more a bore—imagine a lifetime of nothing but green womb-whirls and phallic totem-poles. There is one disappointing Varley, an iceberg or something. (Varley did devote a lot of intelligent attention to the figure, but we see none of it in this exhibition.)

The Tom Thomsons themselves

—John Thompson

Arts calendar

Places to go, things to see

Now that the excitement of having Laurence Olivier in our town has come and gone, and now that the Edmonton Symphony has made its (disappointing) seasonal debut, we find ourselves in a slight lull as far as Places to Go and Things to See are concerned.

The Citadel has started its season with Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*, a domestic comedy which ran for over three years on Broadway. Student rates are available, but unfortunately we have not yet unearthed any information as to what days these are applicable.

In any event, the comedy runs until November 4, so you have plenty of time in which to pick up your tickets. Next week Casserole will level its critical eye at the play.

Also, you can pick up your free tickets for Studio Theatre commencing next Wednesday; see Shirley Neuman's preview on page C-6 for that.

Some of you newcomers to the university district may have noticed that the movie fare in the area is somewhat limited.

There are only two theatres within walking distance of the campus. Of these, the Varscona specializes in long-run extravaganzas (*The Sound of Music* and *Hawaii* have tied up the theatre for three years now), and the Garneau runs mainly smutty and usually bad foreign films.

Those of you who look forward to the day when the Varscona replaces *Hawaii* with a series of good short-run movies (remember the old days?) can forget it. An informed source claims that the next film shown there will be *Camelot*—another sure-fire two-year run.

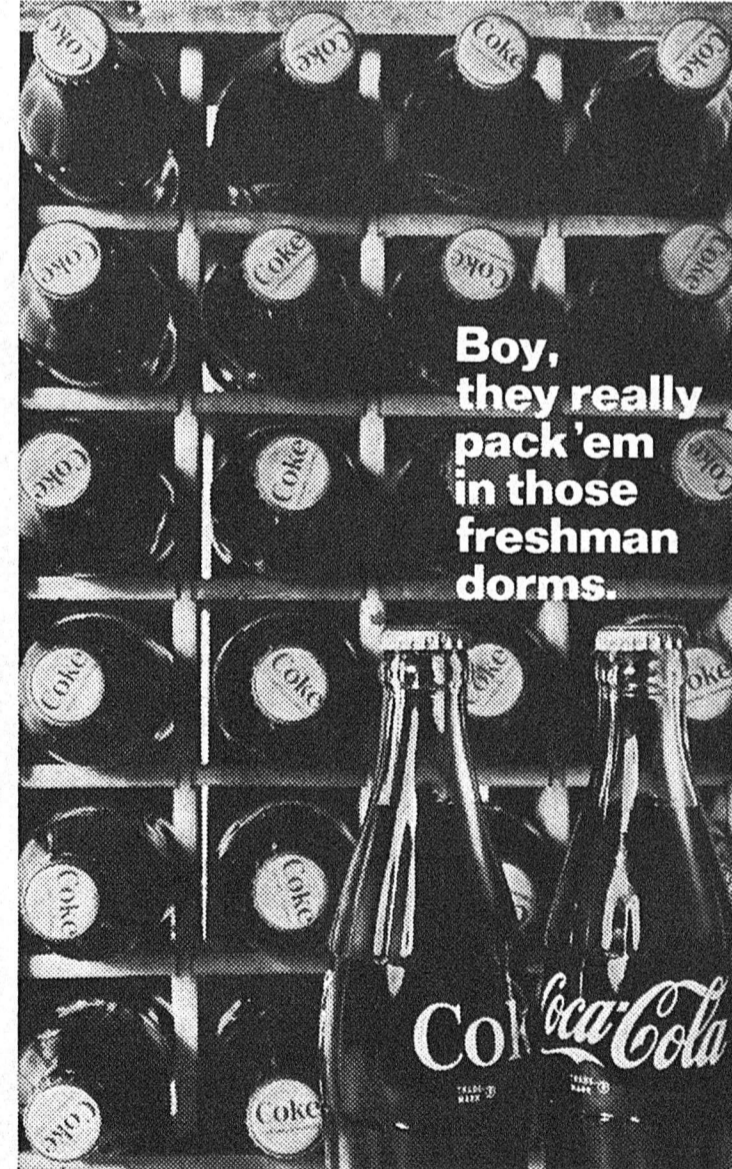
Gordon Lightfoot, the Great Canadian Folk Singer, will be at the Jubilee Auditorium on Thursday next, October 19. Tickets are available at Mike's Newstand.

At the Walderdale Theatre Christopher Frye's *A Sleep of Prisoners* continues tonight and tomorrow.

The display of Canadian art continues in the SUB art gallery, which is sort of tucked in behind the music room in the eastern part of the building. John Thompson gives an appraisal of the display in the article above.

—T.D.

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