

Pilot coasts along

Ingrid Matson

The play opens. Fiona Reid sprints out in her oversize suit jacket and addresses the audience.

"Hi there. I'm new. And I'm nervous. This is my first night on stage and I'm here to tell you a few jokes."

Well she didn't quite say it in that way. But it was a parody of stage fright.

In Erika Ritter's **Automatic Pilot**, Fiona Reid portrays a hyper and nervous stand up comedienne.

As Charlie, her comic routine deals with everything from soap opera to clothes and men. These things aren't singularly important to her, however, they are woven into the fabric of her everyday life.

As the play develops, the audience is increasingly drawn into the relationships between Charlie, her three men, and their lifestyles.

Enter Gene her ex-husband, played by Geoffrey Bowes. He's an earnest type fellow who often

seems strained. He's an actor willing to help her out at any particular time, but not in the long run. He's become homosexual. The character while sometimes weak is seemingly realistic.

In contrast, Nick her boyfriend played by John Evans is aggressively heterosexual. He knows his way around with women and takes pride in it. At one point during the show he jumps out of bed appearing nude before he saunters over to put on his housecoat. It's a surprise and the audience is taken aback, but only for a moment.

He and Alan, his younger brother, played by Patrick Young, take pleasure in discussing and comparing their sexual prowess with women. It's something Charlie disdains in her comedy routines but appears to appreciate in a man of her own.

John Evan's portrayal of Nick as a strong character who has mellowed is appealing, while

Patrick Young's portrait of the dropping out law student is affable and likeable.

Throughout the play the action centres around Fiona Reid and her dry wit. Charlie lives in a contemporary apartment decorated in a hodgepodge of styles including everything from Art Deco to Eskimo prints. Her apartment swivels in and out on a winged set whose effect is quite smooth.

Scattered through the play

there are a number of catchy one-liners.

According to Alan, "She's the type who would sleep around on her things-to-do list," and according to Charlie, "Guys just don't come on to girls who speak English as if it were their native language."

All in all, **Automatic Pilot** is like one of those good books that you never seem to finish. The relationships continue through a will of their own and the lines are good.

Flick crashes

Film Review: The Great Santini To the Dogs, or Dogmeat, as this 60's nostalgia film is being called by insiders, comes with a disclaimer that it is the certified dog of the year. Robert Duvall stars as a practical-joking military pilot whose son, Oedipus, is in love with his mother. Duvall gets revenge by bouncing a basketball off his son's head for about five minutes. The film climaxes

when, as a joke, Duvall from within his flag-draped coffin, signals 14 or so dogs, a swarm of bees, and a neat row of B-52's, to come crashing atop his mourning, short-haired son. The reasons why this film was held back for three years confuse me. Surely this is a film deserving of the highest critical praise.

Norman Bates

Win tickets! See p. 15

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