

ARTS SECTION

Pants off to British comic

By MICHELLE LANG

He is said to be the funniest man in Britain.

Such glowing reviews inspire the potential patron to be not just enthusiastic but also critical. One is tempted to assume before even seeing the show: OK this guy is probably funny, but he can't be that funny.

Well, Rowan Atkinson is that funny.

His two-hour show, *Rowan Atkinson in Review* consists of a series of short sketches. Atkinson presents not so much a series of comic situations as he does a series of comic characters. He is able, with apparent ease to change his persona as fast as he changes his clothes.

He is perfect as a debonair devil who offers his damned a choice of refreshments: hot urine or Bright's champagne. He is indescribably hilarious as a simpy, arrogant actor doing a five minute summary of Shakespearean clichés.

Like the Monty Python troupe Atkinson has a flair for the outlandish and the silly. In one particularly memorable sketch, he puts his bathing suit on before taking his pants off. And he tries to do this without attracting attention of an innocent bystander (played with herculean restraint by straightman Don Tripe).

Atkinson takes common, even clichéd topics and distorts them to become original and hilarious. His average bored churchgoer who has sneezed and can't find a kleenex tries to blow his nose in his pocket without the man sitting next to him noticing. His closed captioned evening news for the hearing impaired is more like Party Game on drugs.

This is not to suggest, however, that he gets carried away with his own material. On the contrary, each motion is focused and fluid. Atkinson can concentrate a magnificent rendition of Margaret Thatcher into a few fleeting seconds.

Yet despite the strength of his material, Atkinson's true gift is for physical comedy. It is his ability to create and express his characters that sets him above other comics. His face is so malleable that at times he

doesn't appear to be human. And his body moves with a grotesque genius. He can be side-splitting without saying a thing. It is this aspect of his talent that makes Rowan Atkinson the funniest man I've ever seen.

In fact, the shows only fault is a consequence of its excellence: you leave wanting more. While it is nice to know that Atkinson is not over-rated, two hours is time enough for only a brief glimpse into what is certainly a prodigious talent.



BONUS!

The Theatre Centre is offering (zowie!) discounts to York students for their previews of the play *Infidelity* by Labiche. November 5th and 6th sees your chance at 296 Brunswick Ave. for only four (cheap!) dollars. A farce with ideas, co-produced by Crow's Theatre and Theatre Columbus. Indescribably inexpensive, and just for Yorkies. Performance at 8 p.m.

Salt unearthed at AGO

By STEPHEN MILTON

After almost two decades of television programs depicting the 1950s as a decade of clean-cut girlfriends and leather jackets, a 1954 film demanding sexual, racial and class equality seems like an out take from the Twilight Zone. Nevertheless, last Saturday night's screening of *Salt of the Earth* at the Art Gallery of Ontario highlighted the reactionary tone of the 50s, and the McCarthyite assault on free speech.

The film was made by a group of men and women who had been accused of being Communists during the McCarthy witch hunts, and decided to live up to their reputation by producing a film about a miner's strike in New Mexico. Academy-award winner Michael Wilson wrote the script which tells the story of striking Mexican-American miners who were fighting against racial discrimination and dangerous working conditions.

What makes the film remarkable is that it is told from the perspective of one of the miner's wives, Esperanza, who struggles with the sexism of her husband to get the women's interests recognized by the male union. Their role in the strike becomes pivotal when an injunction is filed against the striking miners, prohibiting them from picketing; rather than lose the strike, the wives take over the picket line and force their husbands to take care of the children at home.

Details on the events which led to the production and distribution of the film were provided by the documentary, *A Crime to Fit the Punishment*, which was screened immediately after *Salt*. The documentary

related how Hollywood and the US government attempted to thwart the production of *Salt of the Earth*. Given the stigma of working on a film run by alleged communists, it was difficult to find an American crew.

During the filming, the US government accused the lead actress, Rosaura Revueitas, of being a communist and had her deported. A stand-in actress and previously shot footage had to be used to complete the film in her absence.

Once all the footage had been completed, however, the producers faced the problem of editing and getting a score for the film. FBI agents tailed all the principal figures in the production, making clandestine editing necessary. Due to the political controversy surrounding the film, the musical score had to be played by musicians who could not see the film. Consequently, the score's composer had the musicians play while watching a film of black leader, punctuated by white squiggles where the music was to swell or grow quiet.

When the film was finally completed, the projectionists' union refused to screen it, while most distributors blacklisted the film. When a small distributor in New York was found, the film received critical acclaim, from the likes of *Time* and *Newsweek*.

Seen in the 1980s, the film is astonishing due to its anticipation of the women's movement. The film is marred by static camerawork, yet is more than compensated by the acting of real-life miners who despite their wooden delivery, generate a profound sense of authenticity and vibrancy.

Films avoid alienation

By KEVIN PASQUINO

After the glamor, pomp and circumstance of Toronto's *Festival of Festivals* York University keeps the ball rolling with yet another film festival of its own. Running November 4-7, CYSF's *Women's Film Series* is a free, four-evening event featuring ten films which all deal with the way women function within society and the problems they must face.

Focusing on films that have previously received only limited releases, the festival has avoided choosing popular movies like *Sophie's Choice* in favor of less known films, such as *Entre Nous* and *Old Enough*. Elise Hallewick, organizer of the event, thinks that all of the films in the series have been unfairly overlooked in theatres and are deserving of the attention this festival will offer.

Hallewick feels the films chosen for the festival depict women in a realistic fashion, rather than in the super-heroic, alienating manner most Hollywood films seem to favor. Many of the films to be shown during the series are not readily available for viewing, and the West German film *Malou* is getting its first Toronto showing here at the festival.

While the festival has no specific

theme, all of the films deal with women within society and how they cope with the pressures everyday life can present. The variety of nations represented within the films also allow the viewer to inspect the cultural differences that exist towards women outside the United States.

When the *Women's Film Series* is examined as a whole, it gives an international view of how women function in cinema, both on the screen and behind the scenes. Because many of the films are directed by women, they have a unique texture, especially when contrasted to the male directed, American films that a Canadian audience usually views. The opportunity to see a collection of non-commercial films is unique; even more so is the chance to see films of such variety.

The CYSF's *Women's Film Festival* is the first of its kind to be presented at York, but Hallewick hopes it will not be the last. Using the response and attendance of the past four evenings as a guide, it is possible that the series will warrant other events and festivals of its kind on York's campus. Being advertised at U of T and Ryerson's campuses as well as here at York, the free festival promises to be an event that will be both thought-provoking and entertaining.

Excalibur's weekly guide to arts events on Campus.

If you are planning an arts event, drop by Excalibur at 111 Central Square or call 667-3201 and ask for Elliott or Dave.

Essential Conflict

Theatre Glendon

Nov. 6, 7, 8, and 9, 8:30 p.m.

Tickets available by calling 487-6107/8 or at the door

Film Film Film Film Film Film Film Film

Women's Film Series, presented by CYSF

Women's Affairs

Nov. 4-7

See CYSF ad for times and places

Student Chambers Series

Mac Hall, Nov. 8, 12-1 p.m.

Theatre Theatre Theatre Theatre Theatre

An Evening With Robin Field: "Three Questions"

Sponsored by York's P.C. club and the Objectivist group

Burton Auditorium, Nov. 7, 8 p.m.

Tickets available 105 Central Square, \$4.50 in advance, \$6.00 at door

the field south of Stong college. Until Nov. 15

Music Music Music Music Music Music

Winters College Concert: New Artists in Residence

Performing "The Canadian Trio," program of Hayden, Beethoven and Arensky

Winters Senior Common Room, Oct. 31, 8 p.m.

Visiting Artist's Series: Adam Fellegi, Hungarian born pianist

Program: Stravinsky and Liszt Mac Hall, Nov. 6, 2 p.m.

Galleries Galleries Galleries Galleries

Re: Union, a multi-media exhibition of the work of 39 graduates of York's Master of Fine Arts program, 1976-1985

Featured at all six York galleries: Art Gallery of York University, Founders Gallery, Winters Gallery, Norman Bethune, I.D.A. Gallery, Samuel J. Zacks Gallery (Stong College)

Also featuring the outside installation piece "York Swings" by Alex de Cosson, situated in

UNIQUE... ANY WAY YOU SERVE IT.

