

Nuclear Family finds friends within a self-styled implosion

By REBECCA CANN

The family unit is not breaking down, it's blowing up. Act I.V.'s current production of Eugene Stickland's *The Family* incites the implosion at the Adelaide Court Theatre until November 24th.

Directed by Larry Lewis, the production is a remount of the company's December '84 production at Theatre Passe Muraille, and affords a look at a rather unusual and strangely funny family.

Act I.V. was formed in November of 1984 by four York University theatre MFA graduates committed to "dynamic, innovative theatre." Playwright Stickland's use of the term 'bizarre' to describe their work seems more appropriate in light of *The Family*, which he describes as "a kitchen-sink drama gone berserk." The description fits.

The Family is appropriately titled since it is a sum of characters rather than a story. The plot in itself is banal; the Devine family and friends wait for the return of son Duggie (Evan B. Turner) from his peace mission in Cyprus. Duggie, of course, arrives home dead. The difference between plot and play is represented in the actual appearance of Doug



"Yes, dear, you have an exquisite profile... but let's get on with the play." *The Family* continues its antics at the Adelaide Court Theatre.

who marches through the front door with his coffin on his back and promptly settles down underneath it in the middle of the living-room floor.

Reality plays as big a role in *The Family* as natural flavourings do in Jell-O. Yet the trappings are there. The set, designed by Jeff Freedman

is a typical livingroom. A basket piled with assorted sewing stands on the table beside the couch. The TV sits in a corner. But the five chain locks on the front door are fixed on the wrong side, and the telephone is in the audience, isolated as far from the stage as possible.

The lighting, too, maintains a

sense of reality that disappears at a given notice. Designed by Marta Stothers, lights will suddenly focus on one person, one thing, one area of the stage, blotting out realism by creating sharp contrasts. When the telephone or front door-bell rings the attention is there, in sharp white light, emphasizing the ominous presence of the outside world.

The Devine family has learned how to deal with the outside world. They ignore it. Dad to the clan, Sory Devine (Anthony Dunn), resembles a mad scientist as he, in deadly earnest, puts his goggles in place, pulls sheepskin flaps over his ears, and proceeds to disappear into the world of gravitational pull. Mother Devine (Sally Singal) is a sex-starved housewife, pattering about on tiptoe in a searingly tight lame evening gown, collecting her cigarette ashes in the palm of her hand. She has discovered knitting as a salve to soothe the wear and tear of everyday life and she knits thin air with emphatic gestures reminiscent of an up-tempo street-corner evangelist. Devine daughter Cerberus, played with brilliant concentration by Maria Bonanno, spends the entire evening glued to the boob-tube, while images of Robert Urich and the like gracefully flit by.

The family's friends seem to have trouble deciding whether or not they should be coping with reality or the Devines themselves. Gerry Quigley's Roger, Duggie's best buddy, skulks and scurries around the furniture,

terrified pup one moment, gaunt-eyed psychotic devil the next. He eventually succumbs to the Devine magnetism, as does would-be daughter-in-law Jess (Roxanne Hill), whose apathy towards life turns to peculiar pleasure as part of the family.

What transpires onstage is a collection of neurotics-cum-psychotics trapped in a world of their own making. The Devine livingroom reverberates with futile energy as each character enacts his or her own twisted stereotype. These people are inconsequential to everyone but each other, the result of insisting on the maintenance of their individual labels. By over-emphasizing the nuclear family as a unit of role models there is no space for individuals to grow and develop. The Devine fear of the outside world is a recognition that none of them would be able to respond on a significant level to outside stimulus. But instead of disintegrating, *The Family* suggests that self-styled individuals move into a world of extremes where self-destruction is the only end. Implosion is inevitable, and the only people affected are those responsible.

The beauty of Act I.V.'s *The Family* is that these ideas are rarely over-emphasized. They are simply there for the taking. Frequently funny, ridiculous and more often than not bizarre, there are a thousand responses possible after witnessing the mayhem of the Devine livingroom. As an audience member you are given a choice; pick a reaction, any reaction. It will probably fit the bill.

KATE NELLIGAN · JOHN MALKOVICH

Her only crime was helping her son escape to America.

Her punishment was death.

Years later a New York Times reporter is determined to uncover

the story of this heroic woman,

and find the man

who murdered her.

Nicholas Gage is the reporter.

He is her son.



CBS PRODUCTIONS Presents A VANOFF/PICK/GAGE Production A PETER YATES Film
KATE NELLIGAN JOHN MALKOVICH LINDA HUNT "ELENI"
Music by BRUCE SMEATON Director of Photography BILLY WILLIAMS
Production Designer ROY WALKER Associate Producer NIGEL WOOLL
From the Book "ELENI" by NICHOLAS GAGE Screenplay by STEVE TESICH
Produced by NICK VANOFF MARK PICK and NICHOLAS GAGE Directed by PETER YATES
DOLBY STEREO DISTRIBUTED BY WARNER BROS. A WARNER BROS. PRESENTATION
© 1985 Warner Bros. Inc. All Rights Reserved.

OPENS
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15th
EXCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT
TOWNE CINEMA

RED PANCER'S

Deli Restaurant and Beverage Room
Your Catering Specialists

HOLIDAY SPECIAL

Delicatessen Party Trays are 10% off
for York faculty, staff and students until Jan 15/86

Under New Management
Featuring the best in deli foods
"Every bite is a gourmet's delight"

6233 Bathurst St. at Steeles 223-7870



Sabra Circle Introduction Limited

5647 Yonge St. P.O. Box 140, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2M 4E9



EXCLUSIVE JEWISH INTRODUCTION SERVICE

Provides Very CONFIDENTIAL

Access to one Another.
Designed towards Long Lasting and Sincere Relationships

Special Student Rates

call (416) 224-5880

WE CAN HELP YOU PREPARE FOR:

OUR 47th YEAR

MCAT
LSAT · GMAT
GRE · GRE PSYCH
GRE BIO · SAT
DAT · VAT · OCAT
MAT · PCAT
NAT'L MED BDS
NDB · NPB · NLE
ECFMG · FLEX
TOEFL
VOE



The test preparation specialist since 1938

COME VISIT OUR CENTRE

Call Days, Eves. & Weekends
967-4733

720 Spadina Ave. Suite 410
Toronto, Ont. M5S 2T9
Other Centers in More Than 100 Major U.S. Cities & Abroad