

Not again, Woody

By BRIAN PEARL

Woody Allen writes lousy plays. But that's alright, because Woody Allen also stars in them. Allen's quintessential schlemiel act is the classic comic character of our times; he's a theatrical Alex Portnov.

Play It Again, Sam was a tremendous success on Broadway. Woody Allen's fascinating formula for off-beat success worked again. He wrote a thoroughly, laughably mediocre plot and wrote himself into it, playing Woody Allen, of course. Allen did that with his films, What's Up, Tiger Lily and Take the Money and Run, and made his reputation spinning very old hay into gold. The plot of Play It Again, Sam is the straightest bedroom farce ever. A writer named Allen Felix (Red Buttons portraying Woody Allen) gets divorced, and he and his best friend's wife have an affair which resulted from their joint effort to find him another woman.

Red Buttons is a fine comedian, possibly a great one, but only in his own right, not Allen's. The only parts of the show where he comes off even vaguely natural or comfortable in his borrowed role is when he gets to do some prat-falls and physical reaction-type sight gags. Then he's very good indeed. But even delivering some of those great Woody Allen lines (on love-making; "I was great; I didn't have to consult the manual once") the whine in his voice was too obvious and his slumped posture too much a pose.

The supporting cast, and the production in general, lacked good timing and cohesion. Deborah Deeble, who played Linda, the best friend's wife, is appropriately beautiful and bright but doesn't maintain her role long enough or strongly enough for the audience to discern the reality of her character. For, as written, Linda really is a very human person; warm, alive and just odd enough to fall for Allen Felix.

The conscience of Allen Felix appears on stage in the role of 'Bogey': Humphrey Bogart in all his earthy panache, cameras rolling. Allen's occasional consultations at moments of crisis with his ghastly cinematic psychoanalyst and confrere are amazingly funny and very touching near the end. The end of the play is happy, which is just alright, I suppose.

When the play is over and the curtain calls are made the lead emerges from his role as dramatic personage into his more popular role as a stand-up comic. Both Woody Allen and Red Buttons are good monologists and the closing, a funny, off-colour monologue in favour of sexual morality, doesn't hurt the play one bit and helps the leading ego quite a bit.

Play It Again, Sam will be at the O'Keefe until December 15. The evening prices, especially on weekends, are exorbitant. But there are special prices for students at the Saturday and Wednesday matinees, ranging from \$1.25 to \$2.25 on Wednesdays and \$1.75 to \$2.50 on Saturday.

Radical arts left unsaid

By JOHN OUGHTON

The second lecture in the Fine Arts series "Radicalism in..." was given by Eric Bentley on "Radicalism in the Contemporary Theatre." As Bentley pointed out, the topic is extremely vague. It can be taken to mean either experimentation in the theatre which is radical in relation to traditional drama, or else political radicalism expressed through the medium of theatre. Unfortunately, Bentley chose to swell entirely on the issue of political expression on the stage. This was unfortunate since most of the audience members seemed to have come to find out about Bentley's views on theatre, not politics.

Bentley began by stating that with such a large topic to cover, he could only attempt to open some questions up, not answer them. The first issue he thus dilated concerned the contention that real-life events such as the Chicago 7 trial dwarf and render irrelevant theatrical efforts on the same subject. This is not valid, according to Bentley, since theatre and life simply cannot be equated; real life events do not invalidate the dramatic commentary on them.

Bentley seemed to feel that great theatre with a radical political viewpoint is possible, but has not yet been achieved. He did not, however, state this specifically. This general lack of specificity on Bentley's part was irritating. The politically "radical" viewpoint which Bentley assumed, and certainly appeared to support was never really stated. Bentley feels that all successful revolutions are violent, but that the battles aren't fought in the theatre. He denounced, briefly, the Vietnam War, and a political system in which the only choice was between Humphrey or Nixon. Television is

now the effective opiate of the people, according to Bentley, and plays are attended primarily by the radical young from the middle classes. When questioned on the point of just how theatre could reach the proletariat, Bentley seemed to feel that it couldn't.

The fact that the dramatic arts can only provide a small amount of aid to any forthcoming revolution was emphasized by Bentley. The main use of the theatre is as an area where radicals can congregate and work out their problems so that their revolutionary actions will not go off half-cocked, due to incomplete preparation and overwhelming emotion. After the revolution, Bentley theorised, the theatre building itself would be taken over for use by the people. Thus, it seems that the radical theatre will self-destruct when its end is accomplished.

On the whole, the lecture was extremely dry and rather frustrating for anyone interested in theatre itself, Bentley gave the impression that he was suffering

from an overdose of Brechtian ideology without the antidote of Brecht's humour. Many members of the audience were rather hostile to Bentley during the question period; he declined to answer the question: "What are the roots of your radical anger?" on the grounds that it was too personal, and then refused to discuss his general "philosophical bent" as being too general a query.

The Fine Arts Lecture Series so far has been disappointing, with both Wolfe and Bentley having interpreted the topic of radicalism in their field in a somewhat less than electrifying manner. This is no doubt at least partially the fault of whoever set this extremely vague topic. Perhaps Ronald Bloore will give a more rewarding lecture; political radicalism is hard to read into "white on white" painting unless you see it as a scroll on which the names are written of all those who are qualified to lead, or otherwise oppress other human beings. Bloore is speaking on Wednesday January 13 at 8:30 in the Burton Auditorium.

Renaissance begins

Section prizes will be awarded due to the expense of film production.

The festival organizers hope to give as many people as possible a chance to present their work to a large audience. There are virtually no restrictions on the type of art to be presented, and as much of the work submitted as possible will be displayed, limited only by the festival resources.

Musicians will perform in concert halls and coffee houses. There will be displays of painting, sketches, and sculpture. Poetry readings and play performances will be held, films will be shown, and creative writing will be published.

Renaissance '71 has an office at York (N105 Ross Building); information and entry forms are available there from 12:00 to 3:00 Monday to Friday. Entry deadlines are between December 15, 1970, and January 15, 1971, depending on section.

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