

# Entertainment

Editor: Warren Clements

## First of Newfoundland trilogy

# Cook's Colour sacrifices humanity for scope

By J.W. BELTRAME

The first impression of *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust*, now at the St. Lawrence Centre, is the care taken to detail in Murray Laufer's symbolic set of a 1762 Newfoundland port town.

The set utilizes ancient structures and materials, as well as a gallows of modern steel girders. Unfortunately, what can be deduced immediately from the set is pretty much what we come away with after seeing the play.

Michael Cook's historical drama documents the occupation of Newfoundland, first by the British and then the French, near the end of the Seven Years' War. The conflict in the life styles between the conquerors and the conquered affords Cook the vehicle to make his personal statement about the Newfies.

But the play never manages to become more than a historical drama; hence, Cook's downplaying of the historical elements in the play is self-defeating.

The closest we get to real people is Mannan, a British lieutenant whose sense of honour and duty outweigh his love for Marie, a village whore whose heart is in the right place. But this one point of suspense, whether Mannan (Steven Sutherland) can escape his self-imposed prison of duty and go off with Marie (Elizabeth Shepherd), is never allowed to develop.

By the end of the first act we know he cannot set aside duty for the more humane life of the villagers, and we become aware of the tragic end in store for him.

"The bravest men are those that endure," Marie tells him before he leaves, and here we have Cook's simple thesis. Whatever the Newfies may be, they have withstood ages of conquest both physical and bureaucra-

tic, and in this they should take pride.

But the Newfoundland fishermen never succeed in soliciting our sympathies, and this is Cook's fault. He never gives us real people, only stereotypes—the long suffering but good whore, the stuffed shirt officer who struggles momentarily to be human but fails, the storekeeper who puts sawdust in his flour, and so on.

The only person who affects us to any degree is the British captain, a miserable and cowardly man, whose final realization is that he has lived 23 years in the town and affected no lasting change.

The tragedy of the bystanders, spec-

tators in the play of history, never goes beyond the image of the suffering masses, which is only valid as a reinforcement of what should be developed by the main characters. But where are they? They never succeed in emerging from the mass.

The end result is a play which models itself around Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, but the Mother is missing. There are no heroes, therefore no tragedy. Hopefully Cook's other two plays, which finish the trilogy of which *Colour the Flesh* is the first play, will give us a better insight into Newfoundland's heroic people.

It's at the Centre until March 9.

## Playwright illuminates the island condition

I want to tell the truth about the people of Newfoundland, playwright Michael Cook told students assembled for the reading of some of his plays, Feb. 11. "Sixty per cent of *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust* is literally true; they are words I have heard spoken," said the Irish born dramatist who settled in Newfoundland in 1966. ("I didn't begin to function until I arrived there," he said.)

Cook believes that the Newfoundland islanders have been oppressed throughout their history, and his plays recount their method of surviving the harsh elements as well as the politicians in Ottawa. "If this work is able to make people understand better the Newfoundland experience, then it will have been worth it," he said.

"Pride is all they have left," he said, describing the islanders. "They have to fight daily the cruelest weather anywhere, but they have not been beaten by the elements, they have been beaten by bureaucrats.

"They have stripped them of their fish, and now they have nothing left."

Cook likes to think of himself as the John Synge of Newfoundland, and has written a trilogy of plays which chronicle the lives of the people who live there. The final play of the trilogy, *Jacob's Wake*, has just been completed, and Cook has sold the second play, *Head, Guts, and Soundbone Dance*, to the CBC.

The next project for Cook is the establishment of a theatre company in Newfoundland, where he says is a great demand for any kind of entertainment.



Steven Sutherland and Elizabeth Shepherd play lead roles in Michael Cook's *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust*, set in Newfoundland, 1762, and onstage at the St. Lawrence Centre.

## Sight and Sound

### Phase II hosts Works on Paper

*Works on Paper*, a show of paintings and drawings on paper by Carol Bristow and Judy Singer, two fourth year fine arts students, opens Monday for a week's run in the Instructional Display area in the foyer of the new fine arts building. The gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and the opening will take place from 7 to 10 p.m. Monday night.

### Son of Group Show at Winters

*Son of Group Show*, a collection of photographs, prints, zippers, windows and more (yes, more) postcards by half a dozen different people, previews Monday from 7 to 10 p.m. in the Winters art gallery. The show will run from March 5 to 15, and is probably a sequel to the highly successful *Group Show* held last fall.

### Candy sex spoof in Curtis

Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenberg's *Candy* was filmed a few years ago with Richard Burton (as a Welsh poet), Marlon Brando (as a guru), Walter Matthau, Ringo Starr, James Coburn, John Huston and Charles Aznavour. It wasn't as good as it sounds, but the music, by Steppenwolf and the Byrds among others, was entertaining. The sex spoof will be shown tonight at 7 and 9:30 p.m. in Curtis LH-I, for \$1.

### Glendon's Merchant is a farce

Tonight through Sunday, the Glendon College Dramatic Arts programme presents Plautus' *The Merchant*, a Roman farce. The production, which aims to offer students basic learning experience in all aspects of theatre craft, is the programme's sixth major outing, and is directed by Michael Gregory. Performances are at 8 p.m. tonight and Sunday, and at 7 and 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Tickets are \$2, in the old dining hall of Glendon, at Bayview and Lawrence.

### Bethune sees The Last of Sheila

Who was the one who saw *The Last of Sheila*? Was it James Coburn, James Mason, Richard Benjamin, Raquel Welch, Joan Hackett, Ian McShane or Dyan Cannon? A whodunit in the classic style, with a Hollywood gloss and a few in-jokes. The highly entertaining flick surprises the Bethune screen Saturday and Sunday nights at 8:30, for \$1.25 general, \$1 for Bethune.

### Afro-American night at OISE

All-black casts grace two Hollywood-produced films, *Hallelujah* (1929) and *St. Louis Blues* (1929), starring Bessie Smith, which will be shown tomorrow night at the Ontario Institute of Continued Studies in Education, on Bloor near Spadina. The evening of early Afro-American film, sponsored by the O.I.S.E. Graduate Students' Association, Stong College, Atkinson's humanities department and others, will also include films rarely shown and made by independent black film companies: *Spying the Spy* (1917), *Scar of Shame* (1927) and *Borderline*, a European-made film starring Paul Robeson. Pearl Bowser will give an introductory slide lecture. The show is from 7 to 12 p.m., and admission is \$1.50.

## Unexciting, predictable situations pile up in downbeat Last Detail

By WARREN CLEMENTS

For the first ten minutes of *The Last Detail*, the air is thick with every anatomical and theological expletive under the sun.

And after two navy shore patrolmen (Otis Young and Jack Nicholson) are told for the tenth time to "take this shit detail or it'll be your ass", the viewer begins to wonder if the screenwriter has ever heard of interesting dialogue.

Fortunately, the plot machinations are disposed of during this blue streak, and the film gradually improves. The two navy men are told to lead an 18-year old petty thief from Norfolk, Virginia to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where the thief (Randy Quaid) will be locked up for eight years for trying to steal \$40 from a polio contributions box.

The rest of the movie is a model of the archetypal "road" film. The men

have an order, they have a destination, and they meet the usual assortment of dramatically interesting diversions en route, including a drunken bender in Washington and a brawl with the Marines.

Whether or not you'll like the movie depends on whether you're willing to watch three basically tedious men weave their way through minor dilemmas and mildly involving human relationships.

While the film isn't boring, it's a downbeat, slow-paced mini-drama which hasn't much to offer other than Jack Nicholson giving Randy Quaid a good time before the kid gets locked in the brig.

There are the requisite scenes: kid goes on his first drunk, kid digs unfamiliar religious ceremony, and kid loses his virginity (to Carol Kane, the heroine in *Wedding in White* and Art Garfunkel's girlfriend in *Carnal Knowledge*.) And Nicholson's presence holds the disparate pieces together, with occasional touching and funny scenes.

But it's an unexciting movie, a claustrophobic tale of comradeship that ends where it begins. The one interesting fact is that the scenes in New York's Penn Station were actually shot in Union Station (note the "Front Street" sign), and many of the supposedly American exteriors look suspiciously Torontonians.

### Flies, king dies in French dramas

The existential meets the absurd tonight at 8 p.m. as the department of french literature presents scenes from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Mouches* (The Flies) and Eugene Ionesco's *Le Roi Se Meurt* (The King Dies). Admission is free, in the Atkinson Common Room, Room 140.

## Live Stewart rocks from ravers to ballads

By DYNAMITE C. STRANGE

Since his starry solo career began some four years ago, Rod Stewart has presented two distinctive musical profiles. In turn he has played both the bittersweet romantic in his ballads and love songs, and the high-adrenalin good-timing raver in the more heavy beat rockarama numbers he has tried.

On *Coast to Coast/Overture* and *Beginners*, both sides of Stewart are amply represented, and we are

offered a small taste of the rollicking party atmosphere which Stewart and the Faces infuse into their live performances.

Although there are few surprises here, Stewart and the band get it up on a couple of old rockers, *It's All Over Now* and *Cut Across Shorty*, and slow it down quite nicely with a particularly fine version of the Temptations' *I Wish It Would Rain*. If there is a flaw to the album, it is the dragged-out pace of the second side, as Stewart tries to croon his way through John Lennon's *Jealous Guy*, and does a pretty fizzled out take of the old Etta James standard, *I'd Rather Go Blind*.

For a live album, *Overture and Beginners* is adequate if not overly exciting. The Faces' contribution is only marginal, and most of it centres around the playing of guitarist Ronnie Wood. But while he has gained some stature in the last couple of years, Wood is still not that interesting a guitarist, and certainly no match for the brilliance and inventiveness of Jeff Beck, in whose group both he and Stewart once played.



Rod Stewart