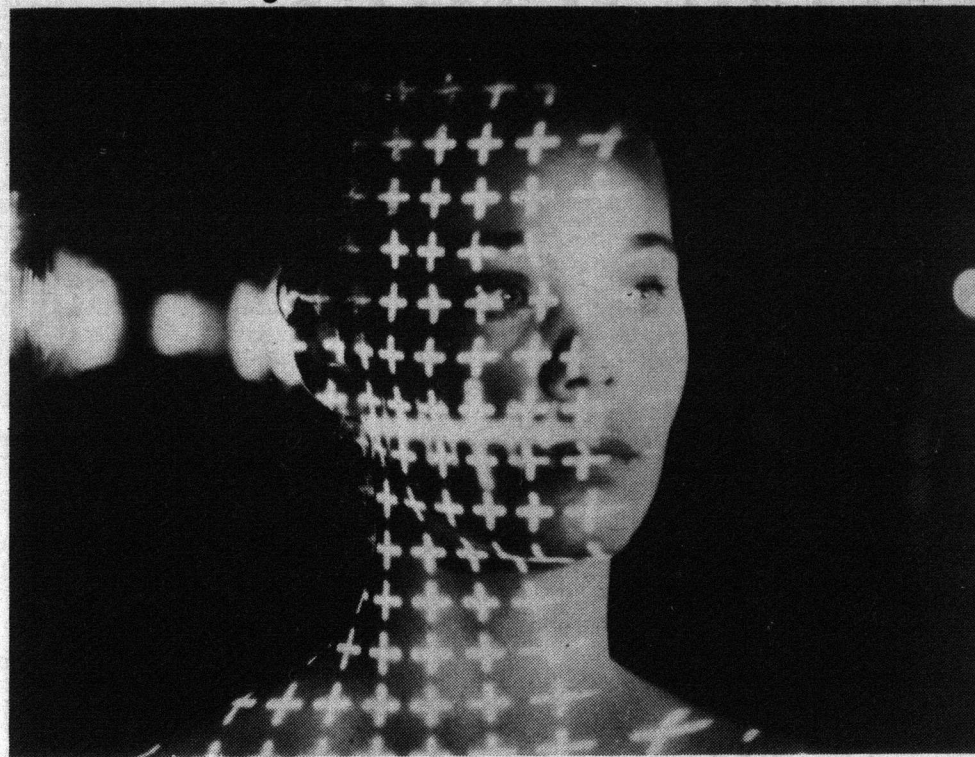


Hollywood cranks out another one



A computer sizes up high-fashion model Susan Day. It is all part of a scheme to perfect advertising techniques and murder some people.

Looker
Westmount

review by Elizabeth H.

According to writer-director Michael Crichton, his most recent screenplay-film, *Looker*, could be best described as "a thriller about television commercials." The computer duplication of live models for maximum impact commercials, though an interesting concept, seems strangely disconnected from the murder and intrigue that occur in *Looker*.

Subjected as we are to a constant barrage of media method it is easy to see how computer analysis of stimulus/response could revolutionize marketing formats by locating the collective perceptual 'Achilles Heel'. Define the perfect visual balance between model and product that will create maximum marketing impact, "duplicate" an animated image of the model by computer and superimpose it on the format. Okay. It makes sense. Incidentally, this type of commercial technology is already being employed to a lesser degree by a company in Texas.

Serious flaws in the storyline of

Looker seem to result from the conflicting dimensions of the central concept. This obscures the motives of Digital Matrix Inc. and negates the validity of their scheme. In addition to its computer manufactured perfection, the *Looker* commercial is charged with hypnotic flashes that emanate from the eyes of the models.

Two major questions come to mind. If video-hypnosis is the operative ingredient of this scheme, then why the need for computer doubles? Assuming they are for some unspecified reason necessary, then if young women can be coerced into computer designed plastic surgery why the need to murder them? Surely a few bright shiny objects would suffice to bamboozle these half-witted babes into signing over the 'rights' to their features.

Thus unfolds the unlikely dilemma of Doctor Roberts, plastic surgeon and high priest to the cult of narcissism. The good doctor, played by Albert Finney is loosely implicated (by way of the most clichéd planted evidence in movie history) in the bizarre deaths of his beautiful patients.

Susan Dey plays one of four models surgically altered to specifications dictated

by Digital Matrix. Thankfully, it is she who survives her vacantly beautiful co-patients. The script kindly provides her with the ability to converse. In terms of dialogue however, Miss Dey's role in *The Partridge Family* was more flattering. She should not feel slighted, though, as the monotone and transparent dialogue also wastes a potentially fine contribution from James Coburn. Falling to a similar fate, Leigh Taylor Young as the 'villainess' puts a lot of life into dying; that is her best scene.

Looker is not a low budget film, but it is a tribute to the misuse of money. The sets are lavish, the art and furnishings of the office set alone, valued at an estimated \$500,000. The more than \$1,500,000 worth of video and computer equipment used in the filming bolster the authenticity of the

technology used, but fail to add credibility to the plot. A sleek Porsche counter-balances the Dacron stretch slacks character of Dr. Roberts but does not provide the necessary vitality for his sleuthdom and/or his 'man of action' aura.

Fortunately, although much of the film is put forth seriously, a series of ironic clichés (hopefully intentional) lighten the format. The good guys/bad guys action in the splashy car chase, borders on slapstick and the absurd satire of the 'big shootout' fetches a laugh. But the notion that black bikinis worn with high-heeled shoes constitute harmonious or comfortable attire for anyone, or that small yappy dogs make good pets, are obviously jestworthy notions. Not to mention the built-in laugh of a company called Digital Matrix.

Slavs invade Edmonton

Noon Concert
McDougall United Church
Nov. 4

review by Grant Guilet

The McDougall noon concert series has taken a dramatic turn with the performance of two obscure works by East European masters. Khachaturian is commonly associated with swirling Slavic dances of interesting effect but little value. His 'Trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano' shows yet another side of the Russian composer - a side which has lain dormant for too long. Deft and arrhythmic, a fundamental awareness of harmonic structure gives unity to this compositionally unorthodox piece.

Thematic material is rarely played at such events since the criteria of taste and conventionality formerly limited selections to the tried and true.

The theme of Stravinsky's 'Suite: Soldier's Tale' is the disturbing one of fate - the soldier's fate - as he trades love for fortune leaving himself beyond love's redemption. Powerfully conveyed, in dense, rich phrases, we are shown his fragile heart and profound passion as the tale unfolds. An uncompromising work, we witness true bravery splinter into erratic, ineffectual melodrama as the heart's containment of love is destroyed. A moving

statement for peace, compassion elevates this work above rhetoric to the higher level of art; this, at least, in the hands of Yoko Wong, John Mahon, and Sylvia Shadish, seasoned musicians of high emotional range. Their integrity as individual performers allow them to ignore normal stylistic requirements providing a dynamism rarely achieved.

But this is only half the story.

Diversity is rare in an audience. Most events draw a limited public response - usually restricted by socio-economic or age factors. Real culture is lost in such instances; incomplete development giving the effect of emotional intensity. The difficulty, of course, is that real conflicts do exist and inter-cultural exchange is sometimes invitation to riot.

Here, however, the mood of mutual respect allowed individuals to relate to the music on their own terms. Meaning was felt and expressed by the very young and the aged, those of high and low social status, the theologically sound and the atheistic. All in one room.

November 11 promises a more accessible concert as works by Bach will be featured in performance by Hiromi Takahashi on oboe, Brenda Haddock-Edwards, mezzo soprano, and Jeremy Spurgeon in his piano debut. So feel free - but remember - no smoking.

Wierd and wonderful scenes from the bardfest

Voices in Alberta
Centennial Library
Nov. 6

review by Peace Bashwell

"Voices in Alberta", sponsored by the Alberta Poetry Festival Society, was a multicultural and poetic experience. In my case, at least, it was experienced through a glass of vodka from the wings. Backstage is, of course, the most enervating place from which to watch a performance. Considering my condition of exhaustion when I arrived at the Centennial Library Theater, where the performance was held, being backstage may have been the only thing which saved me from passing out from fatigue.

Yet the introduction to "Voices in Alberta" could have only been fully enjoyed from the audience's perspective. From their perspective, they saw a small stage arranged in white blocks and backed by a screen, on which were projected images of exploding colour. The music lifted up our anticipation like the theme from *Space Odyssey 2001*. Soon we heard voices: the voices of the muse and the poet. "What is poetry?" he asked. "Voices", said the muse.

"Voices...in Alberta?"

"Voices in Alberta."

Thus was an evening of diverse poetry begun - with a display of power and aspiration, spiced with humour and wisdom. The principal organizers for the

festival were introduced to people who knew them already, in such a manner that it seemed not a meaningless gesture, but rather a potent ceremony, or rite. The opening was classical and almost flawless.

I wish I could say the same for all the readings.

"In the beginning there was the word", said professor Henry Kreisel, the master of ceremonies. As a poet, one learns to hear that "word", and to describe it to his fellows. Thus, it may have seemed to the casual observer, that every poet heard a different "word". If one were to ask Patrick Lane, our overexalted poet-in-residence, the nature of the "word", I've no doubt, from his attitude, that he'd say "overbearing arrogance."

Christine van Saanen, on the other hand, gave the "word" to us in French, a beautiful language, skillfully read. As the muse had said, one need not know the language to appreciate the beauty of its rhythm and sound. So Ms. van Saanen read, to our appreciation, in French and her native Romanian.

It takes an unimaginative mind and undemanding standards, however, to appreciate the poetry of Mary Howes. Although she is a clear, expressive reader and enjoys some degree of popularity, this probably arises from something besides poetic merit. I fail, for instance, to find the allegory in a dialogue about a woman who finds that the "extra cheese" on her submarine

sandwich is actually her lover's "come" ("told you I'd get you to swallow it someday"). Furthermore, I found, from talking to her backstage, that her conversation was equally petty. Ms. Howes was reading from her book "Lying in Bed", the title of which effectively describes the essence of its contents.

Professors Oleh Zujewsky's writings, in contrast again to Ms. Howes, were tasteful and touching. He writes in Ukrainian, and the English translation of some of his poems were read by professor E.D. Blodgett. The arrangement thus provided us with the exquisite experience of Zujewsky's native tongue, as well as the expressive meaning of his poems. The problem is, I can't recall the interpretation too well, because I was fascinated by his speaking capability.

Bill Meilen is well known on the stage and radio, as well as for his control of a repertoire of dialects that range from native Indian to Welsh, and we were treated to a rich variety Friday night. His series of memorable poems were selected from his sketches of Chief Dan George and expressed quite clearly the feelings of the Indian patriarch. Meilen was undeniably among the best readers of the evening.

At about that time, I had sneaked backstage, and was proceeding to get loaded, so I don't remember too much of what followed. Jean-Marcel Duciaume read an immensely pleasurable

number of poems in French. Professor Gerald Lock gave us a Lover's Dialogue, in a Liverpool dialect I found difficult to follow but enjoyable to hear. Professor E. D. Blodgett read from his book in preparation of Canadian poems, the latest title of which was rumored backstage to be "Carefully Spaced Out." Among the English speaking poets, Blodgett's reading was among the closest to my definition of poetry: that is, the expressive development of an essential concept through a controlled medium of rhythm and images. (Yet even that definition is subject to misinterpretation).

However, despite Lock's and Blodgett's efforts, the reading was so heavy by the second intermission that I was ready to do anything to lighten it up, even walk out to say something like "whereof the muse?" in great oratorical tones. However, Georgina Kravitz, the artistic director, had her job on the line; though she was severely tempted to let me go, she held me back. Too bad; my big chance at publicly making a spectacular speech and tripping over the lines, failed. So we finished the next bottle of white wine and I performed a couple of cartwheels across the stage during intermission. Unfortunately, it didn't help much.

The final performance was unforgettable madness - in the worst sense. Those of you who have seen Stephen Scobies and Doug Barbour's antics will know

what I mean. These two English professors think and act primal barbarism (pun intended) on stage, although they may seem normal enough off. I was sitting in the backstage lounge when I heard a screech followed by a loud hiss and a series of monkey chitters. Fearing that professor Kreisel had been attacked by an exasperated audience, I staggered into the wings.

I looked out accompanied by the sound of explosive static in the speakers to find Barbour hopping from one box to another repeatedly yelling something like "B-Bible dible-u", while Scobie made a long sputting hiss into the microphone. This reversion to raw nature was possibly in response to Kreisel's "In the Beginning", and the fact that the muse had left before the demonstration began. Whatever the cause, this atavism went on for about ten minutes. I was amazed at their vocal stamina, but was assured that, as English lecturers, they could stand it. I, however, could not.

Their voices filled the theater, and I saw several people leaving, to make room. A crude finale to what had been, for the most part, a tasteful evening. Fortunately, one can anticipate next year's production with greater pleasure, as the program will be designed, in consideration of this year, and of the fact that there are more than twenty poets in the province. Having gotten it off, the show must go on.