



A touchy-feely, poignant, dramatic, incredibly sensitive... YEAH! moment from *Reuben, Reuben*.

Conti's *Reuben* is delicious

Reuben, Reuben
dir. by Robert Ellis Miller

By IAN CLARKE

When asked why he drank so much Dylan Thomas once replied, "because it's expected of me." It's also expected that a poet have the decorum to die at a reasonably young age, preferably from alcoholism, to complete the archetypal myth. The drunk little man in a lumpy tweed suit, with mussed hair and six-o'clock shadows waving a bottle at the madding crowd, and scribbling verse between binges, has been the archetype of the artist from the time of Robbie Burns. It also helps if he is a womanizer.

McGland (even the name reeks of whiskey), a walking (or stumbling) culmination of all the poet-burnout eccentricities. This film attests to the notion that still waters run deep. It is gentle and unassuming, the flipside to that flamboyant burnout masterpiece, *All That Jazz*.

The story, written by *Casablanca* co-author Julius Epstein, follows the inebriate McGland through all the drinks, bedrooms, and bedlam

of a few days passed in a North Carolina town. The drama is akin to the Kurt Vonnegut style of absurdity—you're not always certain when to laugh and never certain when to feel sad. One enters an emotional maelstrom. If McGland were more of a buffoon, we could enjoy his pratfalls within the context of his upturned world. But he is very human. We have the bittersweet abandon of a loafer who embraces life and death with equal enthusiasm and splendor.

Conti is brilliant—he has a remarkable gift for nuance and phrasing. At all times he is the incarnation of a century of hangovers, artfully exploring the full meaning of Dr. Johnson's comment, "he who makes a beast of himself avoids the pain of being a man." He is sentimental without being maudlin, doomed without seeming pathetic.

Reuben, Reuben should throw English majors into a frenzied sweat, searching for symbolism while gnashing teeth over literary quotations. Robert Ellis Miller, known as an "actor's director," fulfills his reputation. He ranks up with Robert Altman for squeezing excellence from what would otherwise be mundane.

Tilly dallies with dilly of a Deli

By MARY-LOU ZEITOUN

When the son staggers in drunkenly and urinates in the sink, a sense of conflict is immediately established. "The action of this play takes place in a very, very clean kitchen," states the program of the Shaw Festival's "first Toronto Project." *Delicatessen*, written by François-Louis Tilly, is a presentation of the subtle conflicts within a family, conflicts that build and are resolved in a highly dramatic manner.

Each character is firmly established through an intricate piece of stage business—the Father (Al Kozlik) slowly sets the table for breakfast; the Mother (Marion Gilsenan) obsessively wipes up some dirt, the boy (Daniel Allman) makes a toast and jam sandwich, and the Maid (Joyce Campion) quietly peels potatoes. The audience is seduced into the calm fanaticism of these characters simply because of the lack of stage business elsewhere.

There is very little plot progression. The audience seems to wait for a confrontation between the parents and their sullen son. During the lunch scene, which lasted about 15 minutes, few words are spoken. "Romper Room" blares out from the TV and the son's seat is conspicuously empty. When he enters and noisily applies himself to the food, there is

still no confrontation. Watching *Delicatessen* is like waiting, it would be almost boring except for the incredible realism and the last few surprising minutes.

Unfortunately, at one point sensationalism replaces craftsmanship. When the son, played darkly by Dan Lett, saunters on stage with a mewling kitten clutched in one hand and appears to abuse it, a few tight-lipped members of the audience made noisy exits. A decided disappointment in an otherwise beautifully-crafted play.

The high quality of work is also evident in the measured and precise lighting by Donald Finlayson. The progression of the day is faithfully marked from the refrigerator light glowing in the morning kitchen, to sunshine streaming through the windows and finally car headlights flickering into the room at night. The set is everybody's kitchen, from the ugly wall calendar to the plastic tub in the sink.

Delicatessen is a tight professional production, an exercise in stage realism that approaches super-realism. At the same time it evokes haunting and disturbing feelings about family life. If a little animal abuse doesn't bother you, it's a worthwhile play to see. *Delicatessen* plays at the Toronto Free Theatre until February 11th.

Ten .38 Specials to go

In the continuing tradition of challenging *Excalibur* contests, our tireless research team has come up with this little beauty. The first 5 people who come to *Excalibur* (111 Central Square) and give the original names of at least 5 of the following rock celebrities will win two tickets to see the CPI presentation of .38 Special, live at Maple Leaf Gardens on February 10th, with opening act Huey Lewis and The News. If you nail just two of them you will win your choice of either 'Tour de Force',

.38 Special's new album or 'Sports', the latest offering from Huey Lewis and The News.

1. Elton John
2. John Denver
3. Alice Cooper
4. Bob Dylan
5. Ringo Starr
6. Stevie Wonder
7. Conway Twitty

(* Offer good while supplies last).



How much fun can you pack into a VIA train trip?

For a weekend or a day or two, you can pack a lot of fun into a low priced VIA train trip. Ask about our 1 day, and 2 to 7 day fare reductions, our convenient schedules for weekend trips and our terrific group fares. Wherever you're going, for whatever fun reason, take it easy, take the train. Call VIA Rail or your Travel Agent now.

SAVE MONEY...
UP TO 40% OFF!
ASK ABOUT OUR
GROUP FARES
TOO!

