

# entertainment

## Solomon and Papa John fiddle on



Lenny Solomon: "...somewhat less than half of the Lenny Solomon band".

Ted Mumford photo

By Ted Mumford

Sunday was a night for fiddling at York as Papa John Creach and Lenny Solomon took the Burton Auditorium stage. It was a fine double bill marred only by some technical problems and a dismal turnout that resulted in the cancellation of a second show.

Lenny Solomon was half of Myles and Lenny, and is lamentably somewhat less than half of the Lenny Solomon Band. Without him it would essentially be the same band.

Solomon is the only member of the group who doesn't sing, and the Sunday show didn't feature enough of his virtuoso bowing to make him seem an integral part of the sound. His one showcase was the timeworn "Orange Blossom Special", which would be better left to country specialists like Zeke Mazurek of Prairie Oyster.

After an excruciatingly long break, Papa John Creach and his band appeared.

Creach became a member of both the Jefferson Starship and its offshoot, Hot Tuna, after his fiftieth birthday. As the focal point of his own band he finally has room to do his stuff, both as a violinist and a vocalist (a talent neither Starship nor Tuna made use of).

The sight of Creach doing his slightly arthritic boogie to guitarist Joey Brasler's opening power chords was a bizarre juxtaposition. He's a consummate showman: his Mr. Bojangles dance steps and outrageous facial expressions (unparalleled by anyone since Louis Armstrong) are superb.

Unlike Solomon, the instant the man took bow to fiddle he established himself as the center of attention. This is not to say that his band was content to stay in the background. "Bug" Tilford (bass), Steve Haberman (keyboards), Mark Leon (drums), Joey Brasler

(guitar), and Reed King (background vocals) are an absolutely crackerjack band. They spur Creach on and play off of him - and they respect him to the point of applauding after his solos.

The band's repertoire, in Creach's words is "a little blues, a little rock 'n' roll, a little jazz." Much of the material was composed by the junior members of the band, and will appear on Creach's first album, *the Cat and the Fiddle*.

It was a fine blend, with the exception of "Keep on Moving", an uninteresting disco-reggae piece, totally unsuitable for Creach's gravelly voice.

Two personal favorites were the standby ballads "Somewhere over the Rainbow" and "Danny Boy". Creach demonstrated he could be in the same league as jazz violinists Joe Venuti and Stephane Grappelli, were it not for his tendency to make his instrument scream in the midst of showing how he can make it sing. His years with the Starship and Hot Tuna seem to have made him so reliant on playing licks that this habit infringes on his ability to treat a beautiful melody.

At the crashing end of the final jam ("String Jet"), Creach and company received an instantaneous standing ovation, and "Pops" returned for two encores.

The most disconcerting aspect of the show was the meagre turnout. Bethune College council will take a four digit loss on an excellent concert.

Perhaps the two acts were too unfamiliar to the York populace (or too familiar; bringing two bar bands up to York doesn't change the fact that they're bar bands). If you do want to get familiar with Papa John's music, he's at the El Mocambo the rest of this week.



Papa John Creach: "...a consummate showman".

David Himbara photo



Robin Turner (Craig Russell) calls his platonic love Liza Connors (Hollis McLaren)

## 'Outrageous!' B-flick hit

By Alan Fox

Richard Benner's debut film, *Outrageous!*, is an engrossing, sensitive look into material that has previously been taboo and poorly handled. A tender, platonic, lovestory as well as a study into the making of an entertainer, *Outrageous!* is sure to establish English-Canadian cinema as a commercial yet artistic entity.

*Outrageous!* is the story of the relationship between Robin Turner, (Craig Russell) a gay hairdresser, and Liza Connors, Hollis McLaren a schizophrenic.

At the assistance of his friends, especially Liza, Robin decides to try for a career as a female impersonator. He begins on the gaybar scene, first in Toronto, then New York, slowly climbing the "ladder to success".

At the same time, Liza tries to convince herself that she is "normal", by having a baby.

The unusual (to say the least) nature of his material provides Benner with many pitfalls. It is possible to alienate the audience quite easily because they are

probably familiar with its characters only by stereotypes and hang-ups.

Benner neatly avoids these traps, however, by the clever way he has shifted the emphasis of his script. He treats his main characters like human beings with little idiosyncracies rather than as abnormal people. By drawing us into the characters, by relating them as closely as possible to things within our normal experience, we share their triumphs and hurts.

This begins with the opening scene. Under the opening credits we see a tragicomic figure, running through the winter streets of Toronto, garbed only in a housecoat and slippers. We become involved, wondering where she's going. As it becomes evident what she's looking for, we join in her search. Although classic cinema - school technique, Benner uses it to its fullest potential, showing us why it's classic. Having established our interest in the characters, the film goes on to hold our interest and develop it into feeling for the characters.

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## Joyce's portrait of an artist

By Colin Smith

*A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man* is a noble but nevertheless lamentable attempt to transcribe James Joyce's classic autobiographical novel to the screen. Its presence once again raises the thorny point on the limits of film translatability; namely, that there are sources of literature that do not, will not, and could never translate properly onto the screen. In a case like this, and I feel that *Portrait* is a prime example, the creative personnel are landed with a situation that whatever treatment they choose to employ is wrong.

The main problem, though not the only one, lies in the ineffective screenplay provided by Judith Rascoe. Joyce's 200-plus pages novel was virtually a relentless inward stare, a subjective essay on artistic essence and religious conviction that minimized plot and relied heavily on poetic imagery, energy, compassion and a saving sense of lucidity in his subjective passages. Probably few others than Joyce could have mixed such elements together and made them work.

Inevitably such a book is cinematic. The author's tone and his lead character, Stephen Dedalus, are inward-looking. Had director Joseph Strick (*Ulysses, Tropic Of Cancer*) employed more ambitious means to make the film cinematic, it would have been more interesting. It would also have been unbearably pretentious. In taking a pedestrian approach Strick avoids this - but the end result is a film that is static.

The static treatment of the book is not entirely the director's fault. Where Joyce let the narrative ravel, Rascoe's screenplay tightens the flow of the plot line. Unfortunately this omits all nuances, subjectives, and (in particular) character motivations. Seeing as how most of this involves the lead character, the film is irreparably damaged by these omissions.

Directly related to this is *Portrait's* greatest stumbling block: its length. The film is an all-too-brief 100 minutes (approximately.) Joyce's lather of words and feelings should have been articulated in an epic format. Because of the massive amount of condensation, the film can sustain

no consistent mood, character or theme. Transitions from scene to scene are jumpy, to say the least. Characters and events wander in and out unintroduced and unexplained (not to mention unexplored.) There is little sense of the Irish countryside and Dublin locales, and the sense of passing history, particularly in regard to the religious upheavals in Ireland, is sorely missed. And great dialogue chunks lifted verbatim out of the novel sit badly in the actors' mouths, particularly in the latter half of the film.

Worst of all, Stephen's conversion to religion and his withdrawal from it (the main portion of

both book and character) are danced by far too quickly; after that all his motivations become illegible. Bosco Hogan, as the bespectacled Stephen Dedalus, cannot do much with what little he is given, and his general stolidity is wearying.

There are a few positive aspects in this project. Despite the encapsulation, careful attention is paid to the period details, speech patterns, local accents and customs. Stanley Myers' sparse flavourful score helps, and Stuart Hetherington's high-grain photography effectively tones down the film's more pompous moments.

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Bosco Hogan, as the bespectacled Stephen Dedalus.