

Family fare...

by Gurn Blansten

What a concept! Put Sean Connery, Dustin Hoffman, and Matthew Broderick in a film together. Then have them play three generations of a family. Finally, make this a family of thieves that lives together in New York City. Best of all, get actor's director Sidney Lumet in order to ensure the stars will be interested in the project, and cast the elusive Hoffman against type in order to guarantee his commitment to the project. A deal made in heaven, right? Wrong!

This is the unfortunate state of the Hollywood filmmaking industry today. Films are created around the idea of exciting casting instead of starting with a strong storyline or screenplay first. The film described above is *Family Business*, and, as concept movies go, it isn't bad (remember *Twins*?). However, it could have

been much better if more time had been lavished on the script and less time wasted on showcasing the abilities of the casting director.

As it remains, *Family Business* is a satisfactory time-passer, but one soon realizes that the actors have very little to do within the boundaries of the script. Only Connery is able to cut lose and demonstrate his only recently acknowledged abilities. Perhaps his great performance is due to director Lumet, who has collaborated with Connery on four previous films. This is yet another role that proves Connery is one of the great natural actors living today.

Hoffman and Broderick, on the other hand, are trapped in underdeveloped characters with almost nothing to do. Hoffman is at a particular disadvantage because his role is so subdued. All he is allowed to do is be morose and

throw tantrums.

Broderick, one of the best actors of his generation, is stuck with the blandest character of the three stars. Therefore his talents are not demonstrated at all. His reason for taking this role must have been to work with Connery, Hoffman and Lumet. Perhaps he saw this as a learning experience, but it would have been better for him to stick to roles like the one in the upcoming film *Glory*.

After so many films have hit the box-office jackpot recently, it could be expected that concept films like *3Family Business* will be made by Hollywood. However, these are not an example of the majority of films made in the U.S. today. One should not ignore the films which are made with a good script and a lot of care, like the films of Woody Allen and Norman Jewison. The written word is the most important part of the film, and regard-



less of the proliferation of concept movies, some filmmakers will always remember that. As the legendary movie mogul Sam Goldwyn once said, "A great picture has to start with a great story."

Just as water cannot rise to its source, so a picture can't rise higher than its story. The bigger the stars, director, and producer, the harder they fall on a bad story."

Toronto, Mississippi via Neptune

by Angela Van Amburg

Do you remember what you were doing the day Elvis died? Memories of Elvis Presley are certainly evoked in the play *Toronto, Mississippi* by Joan MacLeod, a humorous, at times bitter portrayal of an Elvis impersonator who must contend with his 18-year-old autistic daughter, his ex-wife, and her male boarder during a visit to Toronto.

Michael Keating plays King, representing the fading star in his filled-out white sequined suit. The over-extended sideburns and twang in his voice ring true to the image of his character.

The damper put on the scene by King is swept away by Joanne Miller (a former Dalhousie student) who gives a superb performance in the role of Jhana, his

daughter. She exerts a hyperactive force while switching from her fantasy world to reality.

The interaction between Jhana and Bill creates a fascinating relationship where the other characters seem like intruders. Bill, played by Walter Borden, is the only person who has the patience to treat Jhana as a normal person, someone capable of having sexual desires of her own.

Walter Borden excels as the comical intermediary figure. He is compared by King to Bill Cosby. Yet the play is not all laughs. Ironically, Bill is a failing poet with a book entitled *Black Mourning*. The cross-section of characters offers a diverse sample of an imperfect society.

The frivolities end with the entrance of Maddie, King's cynical ex-wife, played by Kate Rose.

Between Maddie and King the audience is brought down from the light-hearted scenes of Bill and Jhana.

Their overly dramatic bellowing causes a tension comparable to the feeling of a scolded child. This is largely due to the set-up of the stage. The audience is seated around the living room, creating an intimacy with the actors, who

are at times only inches away.

There is often a fine line between the humour and the harshness of reality. When the scene becomes serious, one is left to feel like an awkward guest in a home having a domestic squabble.

Another influential factor of the staging is the opportunity to view the reactions of the audience while watching the actors per-

form. The success of the play is mirrored by the explicitly favourable reactions of the audience. The high point is the presence of laughter.

Toronto, Mississippi, directed by Glen Cairns, runs until January 27th. It is a Neptune North presentation and plays at the Cunard Street Theatre. Tickets are \$12 and \$10.



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Applications and information packages are available at your Canada Employment Centre on Campus. Deadline for applications is February 5, 1990.

This program is sponsored by the Halifax Citadel Foundation.

Starting wages for Pte. II and Piper II are \$6.00 and \$6.55 respectively.

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