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The banks have had it their own way long enough.

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Georgia's REM offers unique vision of life in rural America

By WALTER RINALDI

R.E.M., the Athens, Georgia quartet, brought their "Lifes Rich Pageant" tour to Toronto's Massey Hall October 26 and 27 to a capacity crowd affectionately referred to as "Remmies." According to BASS officials, when the first show was announced, it took a mere 45 minutes for the show to be sold out.

The band is a powerful and emotion-filled unit with Michael Stipe (lead vocalist) at its helm. Stipe's energy on stage is reminiscent of a young Joe Cocker. From his stovepipe hat, to his tie-dyed t-shirt, Stipe bounced around on stage like a graceful psychotic.

The band highlighted their latest album "Lifes Rich Pageant" (on IRS Records), and dipped into their past three albums to give the audience a well-rounded overview of their career.

Songs like "Superman," "Cuyahoga," "These Days," and "Fall On Me" (a song that began its life as a protest about acid rain), all from their latest album, as well as songs from past albums, like "Pretty Persuasion," "Can't Get There From Here," and "So. Central Rain (I'm Sorry)" showed the band's astute power to captivate an audience. The final song of the evening ("So. Central Rain") was performed by Stipe and Peter Buck on guitar, stunning the audience into complete silence

until the song was over.

Visually, somewhat indistinguishable images were constantly flashed onto a black cyclorama behind the drum kit. Visions of rural America, trains, staircases and weather vanes filled the stage with a barrage of white, green and blue lights. The visuals were for the most part very effective, although some of the images were occasionally lost in lighting effects.

The performance was quite an exciting offering, even though the sound in Massey Hall was piercing and inaudible at the best of times.

In the past, Michael Stipe has been criticized for mumbling his way through songs. In concert he shrieks, growls, attempts to play harmonica and mocks Reaganomics, but not once did he purposely mumble. Unfortunately, because the sound was so bad, the first half of the concert sounded like one long mumbled attempt to sing clearly. To set the record straight, before Monday night's show got started the soundman fell and broke his leg. After the band re-did its first song the show went on, pleasing a very receptive crowd.

It's curious to see how far these Georgians can go in the future, now that it seems they are no longer restricted to cult popularity. Heavens no... not total commercial success! Let's hope not. R.E.M. is too enjoyable to see them go top 40 popular.

Stupid directors treat audience like idiots, Bentley tells students

By KEN KEOBKE

Eric Bentley has a habit of starting arguments which often continue for weeks after he's left the room. Speaking to a group of York theatre students last Friday, he criticized what they study and how they study, finding much of which is done in modern theatre an insensible mess.

Bentley is in a position to do so. At 70, he is recognized as a world expert on theatrical criticism, a leading Brecht scholar and translator, a playwright and performer, and editor of over two dozen anthologies.

His discussion with York theatre students, part of a weekly Primetime series, began with challenging the role of the director. The director in theatre is, historically, a recent phenomenon. A hundred years ago, the principal actor directed the play. Later, it was the stage manager or the playwright.

Bentley ties the current omnipotence of the director with the evils of the cinema where the director, because he so precisely chooses what the audience sees, becomes the author. A screenwriter provides a storyline, but it is vague when compared with the thousands of decisions made by the director. This is even reflected in the legal agreements which give the director, and not the screenwriter, ultimate control over the project.

According to Bentley, this sense of self importance leads the director to interpret the play and give his concept, a word Bentley detests. For example, many directors attempt to popularize classic works by reinterpreting them.

Bentley points out that few people have ever seen the most famous of plays, such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Why update a work when few have seen the original? asked Bentley. To do so is unnecessarily treating the audience as idiots, he said.

He is particularly opposed to the fashionable trend of setting plays in more imaginable locales to make them more accessible to the public. Shakespeare had never visited Venice when he wrote *Merchant of Venice*. He chose that city because of its exoticness. Likewise, when Brecht wrote *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, he was under the impression that the province of a few hundred million was a small town. Bentley says that "directors shouldn't be stupid—but they are."

He believes that the role of the director should be to render the play "transparent"; to let the audience experience the author's work with as little interference as possible. "Shakespeare must be turning in his grave, but unfortunately that's all he's turning in... He can't be here to defend himself," Bentley said.

ATTENTION ALL ARTS WRITERS:

We are holding an Arts Writers meeting on Monday, November 3 at 5:00 p.m. New writers as well as old hacks are urged to attend. We will discuss policy, the future of North American culture, and the Bring Back Bob Eubanks Lobby. So come to 111 Central Square and look for Kevin and Angela.