

• Nobody goes there...

# ARTS

...it's too crowded



The Edmonton Art Gallery magazine "Update" came today, as did the slick Imperial Oil culture and propaganda magazine "The Review." The art in the new "Update" is mostly as bad as ever, but there is some magnificent stuff in the latter, in an article called "The Fine Art of Illustration." For example, this work by Heather Cooper of the cover of a book called "The Illustrated Child." Come to think of it, visuals in the "Review" have always been better than "Update". Is there a moral about capitalism vs. government control here? I think so. In a frankly elitist organization like Imperial Oil natural selection weeds out the incompetents in a nicely Social Darwinist manner, whereas with the city-run Art Gallery, where the rabble and their elected jarheads hold sway, incompetents infiltrate much better.

## Verdict: guilty as hell

Inadmissible Evidence  
Citadel (Rice) Theatre  
Until January 24

review by I. and J. Levental

The first act of John Osborne's *Inadmissible Evidence* (now playing at the Citadel's Rice Theatre) may stir you up or leave you numb. But not matter which way you react, you will no doubt find yourself hoping for a short second act so that you may go home as soon as possible or at least escape to the parking lot where the world may not be warm but it will at least be recognizable.

As for ourselves, we felt like having a glass of milk with cookies or reading some substantial literature, such as *Peanuts*. At least Charles Schultz offers well-rounded, dynamic characters whose lives interrelate on a realistic, human level and whose problems one can identify with.

Such fortune, however, was not to be realized. The second act dragged on at least as long as the first, but was even more boring, more tedious, more incoherent.

*Inadmissible Evidence* is about Bill Maitland, a 39-year-old lawyer and a failure in every aspect of his life. He finds that he is being crushed by a web of multiple personal troubles which slowly but devastatingly collapses in upon him. The source of such troubles are his innumerable mistresses, his long-suffering wife, his harassed employees, his dissatisfied clients, and his none-too-talkative daughter (just for starters).

There is nothing inherently wrong with a protagonist who finds that life is overwhelmingly difficult: Willy Loman was also incapable of coping successfully with the pressures of every day existence. Yet *Death of a Salesman* is a great and powerful play. Like Loman, Maitland loses contact with reality and drifts in and out of an imaginary realm of dreams and haunting memories. Loman, however, achieves the stature of a tragic hero, whereas Maitland never rises above the puny and the pathetic.

You can't help but dislike Maitland from the very start. And by the end you don't give a damn about him. This is because Osborne never gave the poor guy an inner life. He is merely a superficial hodge-podge of ramblings, delirious fits, and directionless hostility.

At their best the supporting characters have two dimensions. And the play itself has no dramatic development. The plot, if one may call it that, chronicles Maitland's gradual withdrawal from the world and his subsequent alienation from everything and everyone around him. One by one, he is deserted by all who ever may have cared about him, including patrons of the Rice Theatre who understandably write him off about mid-way through the first act.

In fact, one of the most interesting things to do at *Inadmissible Evidence* is watch the audience reaction. Some people plunged into deep thought (composing their grocery lists, no doubt); others intently studies the backs of their hands; still others did what we did — gazed at one another.

The set, done by Allan Stichbury (who usually makes such economical use of space), is excessively elaborate and wasteful. Or perhaps the director, Tom Kerr, is at fault for under-utilizing it. In either case, the well designed second-floor library stood vacant and dark except during the first ten minutes of the play.

Eric Schneider, who portrayed Maitland, must also take his share of the knocks for this flop. He was either bored with the role or unable to handle its difficulty (whichever comes first). His nervous gestures were like cardboard cut-outs taken from an actor's handbook of angst and anxiety pasted on top of his lines. There was no characterization of any depth, just a string of over-rehearsed expressions and repetitive, soap-operatic demonstrations of emotional fatigue.

The other actors seemed trapped in this barren, lacklustre production. We were particularly surprised at Kari Sivam (who played Maitland's daughter) for bothering to show up at all in this minus 30 degree weather. She is on stage for about seven minutes total, utters not a single word in that time, and spends much of it with her back to the audience. For this she needs the Schoenberg Acting Studio?

Is there anything good to say about *Inadmissible Evidence*? Well, it does set a new record low which may aid theatre-goers in their assessment of mediocrity. Otherwise, one can only conclude that this production is not only *Inadmissible* — it's *Inexcusable*.

## Flashback even better

Frenzy  
Spit Enz  
A and M SP69827

by Richard Watts

The last few years have seen a number of bands come out of Australia and New Zealand: AC/DC, Flash and the Pan, Mi Sex and Split Enz. They have all brought a unique, new sound to North America.

Split Enz first made it into the charts with a block-buster best-seller: *True Colours*. As so often happens with this phenomena, the band is placed in a dilemma. They must live up to the reputation built on the strength of their first and only record.

Just where do they go from here?

The album *Frenzy* managed to solve part of that problem since in order to put it out, they didn't have to go anywhere. All songs on *Frenzy* had been recorded prior to *True Colours* and were simply re-mixed.

All songs on *Frenzy* have the same attention to melody as the previous albums, although the sound is not quite so polished. This is not to say that the record is bad. On the contrary, if the music is less polished it is also more energetic and comes across with more vitality.

That 'spacey' sound that was characteristic of *True Colours* is not present to the same extent. Echo chambers and long, reverberating chords have yet to be introduced. The songs are played with less high-hat drumming and come across with a great deal of punch.

The vocals are innovative and in my opinion better than they were on *True Colours*, which to me sounded insipid and sickly sweet. The vocals on *Frenzy* can be soft and mushy sometimes, but at other times they are gut-poundingly powerful.

Although it lacks the immediate



appeal of previous releases, *Frenzy* is an album that grows on you.

For those who enjoyed *True Colours*, and *Wiata*, *Frenzy* is definitely worth the money.



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