

# Phoenix looks at nuclear issue

by Gilbert Bouchard

"It's a pretty grim subject," says Phoenix Theatre artistic director Bob Baker of his latest production, *When the Wind Blows*.

"Our play is a positive work," he says. "It isn't like *Threads* and *Testament*, which graphically show what happens to the human body after a nuclear war."

Instead, *When the Wind Blows*, chronicles the attempts of an elderly English couple to survive in the aftermath of a nuclear attack.

"The irony of the play is that the two characters are so optimistic," says Baker. "They keep on thinking that everything will blow over, just like in World War II."

"The couple wait for the all clear signal, and can't understand why the radio's off, why there's no electricity or water, and why they have sores and their hair is falling out," he says. "The play's characters are hopelessly innocent. In a way they are symbols for the perfect citizens, from the government's point

**Bob Baker, artistic director of the Phoenix Theatre, talks about their latest play *When the Wind Blows*.**

of view that is. The husband believes the government line, while his wife is the voice of common sense. She becomes the spokesperson for the audience."

"It's a different kind of play," said Baker. "It shows how ludicrous it is to try and survive a nuclear war."

The screenplay, written by Raymond Briggs, is based on Briggs' adult comic book of the same title, a fact not forgotten by Baker who has gone out of his way to acknowledge the original source of the work.

The set, the costumes, and even the soundtrack, all help emphasize the play's comic book feel. Bright colors, simple

designs and a childishly simple backdrop give an almost surreal atmosphere to the proceedings. "The play opens with dogs barking, and birds chirping," said Baker. "But we had people imitate the dogs and the birds. It's with the dropping of the bomb that reality starts to seep in."

"It hasn't been easy to put a cartoon book on stage," he said. "But what has been easy was to translate the feeling of the book. We've worked hard to be honest to the book, while trying to make it our own. We've been very faithful to the book. It's so wonderfully written."

Given the play's subject matter does Baker consider it a political play? A definite no.

"My job is to entertain, not to enter politics," says Baker. "I don't think a play should try and make a person think in a certain way. No one likes to be told how to think, and I don't like shoving ideas down people's throats."

"I do believe in a collective consciousness, and I do believe that the theatre can effect change, but we should only try to make people aware."

Baker describes the Phoenix's mandate as a mandate to challenge. "We're dangerous, we're a quality theatre, and we're unpredictable."

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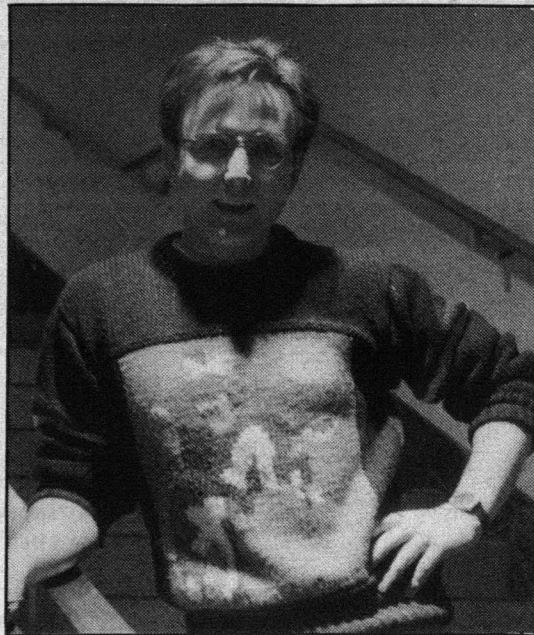
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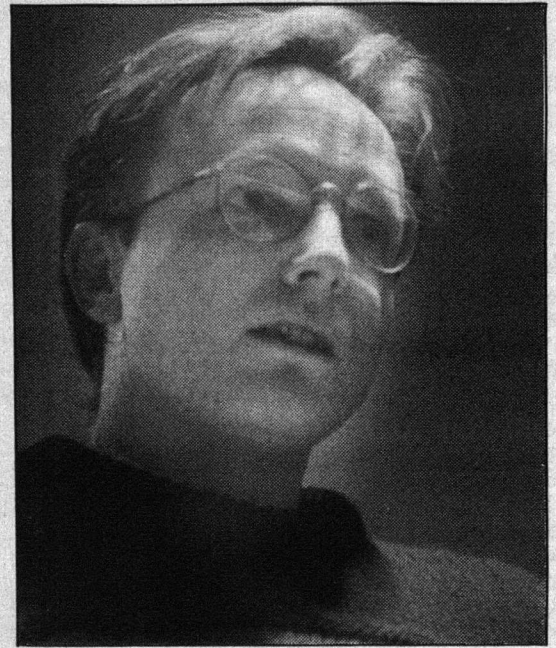
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"We've been very faithful to the book. It's so wonderful."



"They keep on hoping everything will blow over, just like in World War II."

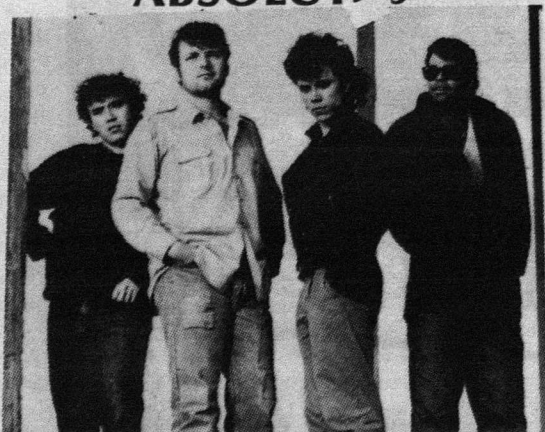
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Admissions & Transfer Committee		3
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