

Sisterhood and suicide make for clever *Crimes*

By KEN KEOBKE

Last week, many students on campus noticed pictures of a cat hanging in a noose. The poster for Beth Henley's play *Crimes of the Heart* may have seemed vulgar and sensational, but after seeing the play, the image is given a bittersweet interpretation. The Pulitzer-winning comedy, performed in the Samuel Beckett Theatre, was a great success, if not always great theatre.

It was a great success in that it gave a group of undergraduate theatre students a chance to practice their craft—design, lighting, sound, acting, producing and directing—in front of a real audience. What made this performance of *Crimes of the Heart* work so well was that the reason and motivation for the performance came from third year director Shyam Salvadori and the other students involved, on top of their regular assignments.

Technically good shows are relatively easy to come by and, thanks to a generous budget from the Samuel Beckett Theatre and the support of the Theatre Department, the play's set in a midwest kitchen with a gas

range (for sticking one's head in), was realistically depicted. It's harder, however, to expect award-winning acting.

Inexperience is one reason for this, but age is another; kindergarten students who are multilingual mathematical wizards can be found but it's almost impossible for that same brat to pull off a convincing Hamlet. Makeup can only go so far in making an actor seem older and more mature.

The two males in the production, Glen Blair and Ewan McLaren will benefit from the natural aging process. Despite high energy, their work was wooden and stilted. Nicole Arends, playing an elderly mother of two, was also difficult to believe at times, and the choice of having her as the sole person speaking in a Southern dialect often made her role a caricature.

Much of the praise for the success of the production goes to the three Magrath sisters played by Suzanne Belanger (as Meg, the failed singer), Marjorie Lecker (Lenny, the lonely heart who has deprived herself in order to take care of their grandfather)

and Michelle Martin. The characters have been brought together because the youngest sister Babe, played by a wonderfully bubbly Martin, has shot her husband.

The sisters' three hours on stage together is spent exposing their frustrations and differing attitudes toward life. As with most families, these frustrations revert back to childhood rivalries such as "Why did Granny always let you wear dozens of bells on your coat and we only got three apiece?" and other events. Most importantly, the sisters discuss the suicide of their mother.

When Babe attempts suicide, first by rope (it breaks), then by the oven, she is suddenly hit with the realization that their mother was afraid of the dying alone. This realization, that death is lonely and her mother was not crazy, allows Babe and the other characters to gain a new perspective on themselves.

The three hour production was very ambitious and although at times it didn't work, the audience was left looking a cast and crew who will certainly be worth watching in years to come.

Ford's performance admirable but just too much of a good thing



JUST ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY: *The Mosquito Coast* stars Harrison Ford (bespectacled), River Phoenix (!), and Hilary Gordon (cowering).

By KEVIN PASQUINO

Getting away from it all means heading up to the cottage for most people. But for Allie Fox and his family, getting away from it all means leaving the not-so-good U.S.A. and moving to Central America to build a new corruption free civilization.

Harrison Ford and director Peter Weir, who together made *Witness*, have again teamed up for an adaptation of Paul Theroux's best-selling novel, *The Mosquito Coast*. For Ford, gone is the adventurous and sexy hero Indiana Jones and the strong detective of *Witness*. In *Mosquito Coast*, Ford is Allie Fox, a slightly crazy inventor and a family man. Frustrated with the way American culture has degenerated, Allie packs up his family and heads south to build his vision of paradise.

Ford is the star of this film in more ways than one. In addition to his top

billing, he is also responsible for carrying the whole movie. Allie's wife (Helen Mirren) is only generically referred to as "Mother" and their children function as a cute backdrop for their father's eccentricity.

River Phoenix, the handsome young actor from *Stand By Me*, gives a good portrayal of son Charlie. He is the only other character in the film who is even slightly developed. Through Charlie's eyes we see Allie deteriorate from a loving father to obsessed, uncaring visionary. Director Weir never delves deep enough into the other characters for us to understand why they keep following their crazed father and husband. One expects Allie's wife or children to rebel at some point, but they never do.

Perhaps the film's greatest weakness is its length. With only one character in control of the whole film, one begins to wish that the

movie was either shorter or had instead been made into a TV mini-series.

In spite of this, Harrison Ford's performance as Allie Fox will probably earn him an Academy Award nomination (the Academy loves leading men who take eccentric, dramatic roles), but *The Mosquito Coast* is an ambitious film that never fulfills its potential.

While *The Mosquito Coast* as a book could afford to have one central character, the film suffers because of it. Ford gives an excellent performance, but it's too much of a good thing. Some variety would have been appreciated, and more character development would have also helped, but unfortunately none of this is presented. *The Mosquito Coast* is at best an interesting study of the extremes a man will go in order to fulfil his dreams, but as a likeable film it's a disappointment.



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