

Steps Around the House on the verge of making it big?

By BARRY WALSH

Last May, when spring was easing gently out of the picture to pave the way for a summer of fun, laziness and stifling heat, the local music scene was heating up more than it ever had before with Q-104's production of the Homegrown Project, Volume 1. Seven bands were chosen to appear on the Homegrown LP (recorded at Solar Audio, metro's most prominent studio), metro's top live for the Homegrown concert. Well, it's past history that to Haywire went the spoils, yet, one band provided such a strong impression on both the audience and the powers that be in the local music scene that things are going at full speed for them—with no signs of letting up.

It is a fact that this area has not produced a band like Steps Around the House in its long convoluted history as a metropolis. Thus, the reactions to them have been extreme—they have been violently

supported and violently opposed. The Steps approach to new music is so unique that it could indeed scare off many of Metro's more conservative music appreciating youth, but this unique approach seems to be working fantastically.

Since the Homegrown project, the band has served as the opening act for Platinum Blonde's Maritime tour, received heavy airplay on Q-104 for their contributions to the Homegrown LP (*Pull the Pin* and *Beat of the Devil*), performed various university gigs, and, most recently, turned in a most impressive performance on CBC's "Rock Wars"—another "battle-of-the-bands" format. More than this, many people out there think that these guys are the next big thing.

The Steps are bassist Jim Parker, vocalist Peter Baylis, guitarist James Logan, keyboardist Bruce Murphy, and drummer Sean Bryson. After the recent taping of the CBC television show (which will hit

the boob tube in January), I discussed the steps that Steps have been taking towards superstardom with bassist Parker.

Parker had a few things to say about Q-104's brave foray into bringing local talent up front. "Really, Q-104 was the only radio station that was willing to take the chance. It was a great springboard for us, and I don't know if we would have achieved what we have by now without the exposure it provided for us." As for the album, "Well, it has a nice cover. Hal (Harbour, one of Q-104's more artistic jocks) did a great job with the cover. However, it would be a lot better if they brought the price down to where people would want to buy it. I don't think it'll sell very well at the price it's at now, because the average customer can buy his favorite hit LP at Kelly's on sale for much less than \$8.98."

One of the band's most prestigious accomplishments since its introduction to the public in May was its status as opening act for one of Canada's fastest rising bands, the three lovable mop-tops, Platinum Blonde. Steps Around the House warmed up (and sometimes overheated) throngs of youngsters in Antigonish, Kentville and Dartmouth, and received favorable reviews for each date. However, there were problems.

"Kentville was a lot of fun," says Parker. "We met a lot of maniacal people, actually. However, we didn't get a sound check, so it didn't really come off as well as it continued on page 22

See how they walk?

By MARY ELLEN JONES

Picture this—a light-blue speckled curtain rising, quaint recorded music playing in the background, and 100 people crowded shoulder to shoulder settling in to watch a performance of *See How They Run*, by playwright Phillip King.

Performed by the Dalhousie Theatre Dept., *See How They Run* played Oct. 17-21 at the Dal Arts Centre.

The play is about an American actor who marries an English vicar and comes to live in an antiquated English village immediately after World War II. Traditional customs are a way of life here, and her American upbringing disturbs at least one member of the village community.

Surrounding the actor are an American corporal, a tart English spinster and a menacing Russian spy.

The fun begins when mistaken identity entwines around other mistaken identities. The result is hilarious confusion and chaos.

Eagerly anticipating a good English farce of ludicrously improbable events and absurdly futile proceedings, the audience was presented with a basic, box drawing room set, with little room for symbolism and innovation, where characters were free to move frantically.

Miss Skillon arrives on stage aggravated by the action of the vicar's wife. In the background, instead of the loud, menacing, boisterous voice of a woman practicing singing exercises, as the playwright intended it to be, the sounds of whimpering female tones fill the air. This soothing rendition of a lullaby does not annoy the character as it should have done, taking away from the original comedy of the play. Here starts a series of points where this production of *See How*

They Run does not live up to its potential.

Many times, when the play wants to move faster, the energy of the characters seems to die and you begin to notice your inadequately cushioned seat.

During the play some actors of the Dalhousie Theatre department are far from convincing in their portrayal of the characters. There was not the tension that there should have been between Penelope, played by Sheri Pederson, and Lionel, played by Scott Owen. Owen at times acted more like Pederson's father than her husband.

Pederson did not even look like a glamorous American actress; rather, she remained a Canadian woman with a British accent.

There was also no erotic appeal between Clive, played by Paul Smith and Penelope, as the playwright intended. Penelope and Clive were more like bratty children than a man and a woman whose relations were spiced with sexual tension.

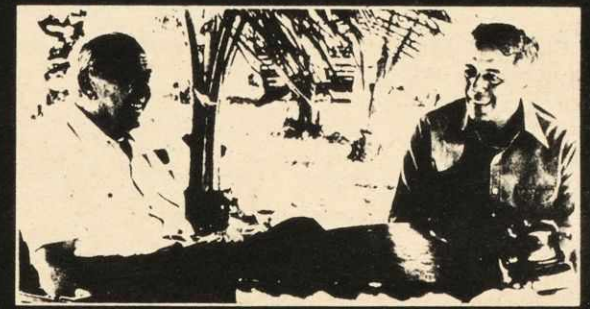
Some of the actors insisted on over-acting their roles as well.

Christine Walker in her role as Ida (the maid) introduced her hyperactive character too early in the play, leaving no room for expansion towards the climax.

There were, however, some fine performances by the supporting actors. The Russian spy, played by Martin Surett, had an extremely charismatic, at times menacing, stage presence. Sheldon Davies, in his role as Sergeant Towers, held his authority on stage well to produce a comical atmosphere quite suited to his police outfit.

By far the most outstanding supporting actor was Trinity Dempster. She played the role of a drunk spinster marvellously and knew how to pace her character. The director couldn't have cast a better performer for the part. □

Getting to Know the General



The Story of an Involvement ★

Graham Greene

The writer and the General

By SIOBHAN McRAE

Admirers of Graham Greene's novels are sure to enjoy *Getting to Know the General*, a short personal memoir of Greene's five-year friendship

with General Omar Torrijos of Panama. Greene's newest book, although technically a documentary, is filled with as many engaging characters and bizarre situations as his fiction, and it makes for equally entertaining reading.

The friendship begins in 1976 with an invitation to Greene to visit Panama as the guest of the General. Greene's sense of adventure prompts him to accept this request from a complete stranger and his resulting fascination with the country of Panama and its people causes him to return several times over the next few years.

The central figure in the story is the complex and always slightly distant General. Having taken power in 1968, he is now fighting down his desire for a direct confrontation with the U.S. over the Panama Canal and instead is trying to work out a treaty with the Carter administration. Meanwhile he offers a haven to refugees from other Latin American countries and slowly edges Panama toward his dream of social democracy.

Torrijos' character is an interesting combination of strength and gentleness, practicality and idealism, caution and impetuosity. The General and his guest seem to share a mutual admiration, and Greene soon becomes as close a friend to Torrijos as is probably possible with a man who seems to be a loner.

Equally interesting as a character is José de Jesus Martínez, or "Chuchú". Chuchú is a confirmed Marxist and the General's most trusted member of the National Guard. He acts as Greene's companion and guide, and his intriguing personality inspires the author to start planning a never-to-be-completed novel about Panama, with Chuchú as its central character.

Throughout the book we are treated to incidents that Greene must have seized upon as obviously good potential fiction material:

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Thief of Hearts

Like Handel on a kazoo

By MATT WILSON

Thief of hearts is a suspense thriller with the kind of advertising that suggests a lurid plot involving the stalking and degradation of a brainless female victim. The ads lie. Feminists can relax, the movie depicts women in a favourable light.

A thief burglarizes a home. He steals the secret diaries of the wife. He reads them avidly, and then begins to arrange the fulfillment of the frustrated wife's assorted fantasies. This much is revealed in the promos, and I will not spoil the film by revealing any more.

There is violence in the movie, but not the kind that gives bad dreams. There is sex in the movie, but not the kind that gives good dreams. Surprisingly, *Thief of Hearts* has a principled outlook on life, and its leading roles involve people who are concerned about doing the right thing.

The star of the show is Steven Bauer, who plays the thief. The female lead is Barbara Williams, who plays Mickie Davis, the woman with the kinky journals. These two actors have hauntingly familiar faces, and unknown names, suggesting a background in television.

The husband of the fantasy-prone woman is Ray Davis, famous author. He is played by John Getz, a soap opera star. The cast performs at a level of minimal competence.

The film is a couple of notches better than what you'd get from the

TV, but in six months or so, when this film becomes a TV film, it will go down comfortably with a McCain's Pizza and a beer. The sex scenes are made to be cut, and the foul language is also expendable.

The film's many failings will be familiar to TV watchers. Characters do not show their motives, they tell them. We do not discover that the husband is villainously neglectful of his wife until this is stated as a fact. We do not know that any two people love each other until they say that they do.

The whole point of acting, and the essence of good drama, is to reveal motives and feelings through actions.

Another TV touch is the tinsel-town insistence that no character is worthy of note unless he possesses awesome wealth.

The thief, for example, drives a classic Mercedes, lives in an apartment the size of a warehouse, and carries thousands of dollars in cash. The diarist's husband is the most famous and best-selling children's author in existence. In the TV mentality, money equals significance.

In a world filled with really rotten films, *Thief of Hearts* cannot be mercilessly panned. It is mediocre stuff. When it rises to address moral issues, it causes the sort of aesthetic confusion that might arise from a recital of Handel's *Messiah* on a Kazoo—one appreciates the aspiration, but resents the results.

Thief of Hearts is playing at the Paramount Theatre on Barrington Street. □