

## How a murder mystery can be absolutely boring

by Bea Renton  
& Anya Waite

*Filthy Rich*, by Canadian playwright George F. Walker, proves itself to be an incongruous melange of boring, weighty scenes interspersed occasionally with witty and engaging dialogue. The overall impression of Neptune's latest production is that of a somewhat sturdy and intelligent script which disappointingly fails to be illuminated by Peter Froelich's uninspired direction.

The play focuses upon the rejuvenation of an apathetic ex-"private-eye", Tyrone Power, through his reluctant entanglement in a complex gangster murder-mystery. He is dragged out of his chronic doldrums by the enthusiasm and naiveté of Jamie McLean, part-time telegraph delivery boy and later Power's assistant. Together the two tackle the inexplicable disappearance of a mayoralty candidate and the equally inexplicable appearance of a ruthless gangster, Henry "the pig" Duvall, two "filthy rich" sisters, Ann and Susan Scott, (One of whom is Duvall's dame) and a dead journalist clutching half of a million dollars in a black briefcase. None of the predictable components of an Al Capone-like film are forgotten by Walker.

The script, however, heavily favours the two main characters, McLean and Powers, giving them ample room for character development and intuitive personation. Minor characters remain largely one-dimensional; the script proves itself most uncomplimentary to these performers.

The first scene of the play is frustratingly flat. It fails to inspire the audience's interest as any good mystery play of its genre should.



The scenes are frequently sluggish and the technique of employing blackouts between scenes fails to generate the desired surmounting of the audience's tension. The second act though, improves greatly upon its predecessor; it is far more amusing and involving. Blackouts are successfully used here and the effect is that of livelier effort.

Undeniably, the best performance is that of Toni Nardi as Jamie McLean. He delivers a dynamic and energetic performance with intense conviction. Tackling his role exceedingly well, he often maintains the audience's interest single-handedly. Nardi is a truly talented young actor whom we hope Neptune will have the smarts

to use again!!

Donald Davis is less successful with his admittedly more difficult role. His portrayal of Tyrone Power as an all too often drunk and depressed emotional slob is tiring and heavy-handed. Froelich's weak direction allows for the expansionism of Davis' irritating interpretation even more.

Kate Lynch, as the secretive Ann Scott, is unconvincing and superficial. Ironically, even her elegant costuming fails to restore any threads of an improved performance.

Ann's sereptitious sister, played by Susan Hogan, purveys a little more depth and understanding of the character. Hogan is a beautiful woman who unflatteringly mesmer-

izes the audience.

Other performances include Henry "the pig" Duvall, played by Goerge Merner, an actor with outstanding credentials. Again, partly due to the direction (or lack thereof) and possible miscasting, his portrayal of a Mafia-type thug is short of palatable. Merner is testimony to the fact that simply possessing an impressive list of credits does not mean that he can lend his talents to every role. Some casting discretion must be taken not only to achieve a reputation as an actor but to maintain it as well. Victor Ertmanis, as a relatively minor character, Police Detective Stackhouse, remembered only for his dismal portrayal of a predictably trench-coat clad detective.

The set, designed by Roy Robitschek, is of a typical film noir variety — venetians blinds, heavy, forboding shadows, and the flashing neon lights of the harsh inner-city strip below. This particular style lends itself well to the projection of a murky and corrupt environment. As is often true with Neptune's productions, the set-design's formidableness and intricacy dominate one's impression of any scene — in this case, more so than the acting.

Costume designs, also by Robitschek, have been poorly researched and thus are gravely inconsistent. The costuming, particularly of the women, fails to reflect the styles of any one period. Instead, stunning vogue gowns, pepulam jackets, and sleek A-line shirts from the late 1930's are disconcertingly juxtaposed with the pseudo-new wave and suburban casual of the second act. This contrast is particularly curious in the light of the fact that the play occurs in a time span of less than *one week* — not 50 years!!! Simple technical misdemeanours as the wearing of panty hose rather than *seamed* nylons (as panty hose were not yet invented) have also been committed. It is difficult to accept such errors from a designer as experienced as his biography leads us to believe, especially when there are talented young designer's such as Andrew Murray anxiously waiting in Neptune's wings.

Unfortunately, we cannot recommend *Filthy Rich* to anyone who is not "filthy rich" themselves. Though there are a few entertaining moments the final verdict must be that the financially restricted students could do better with their (plus) \$6.00.

(*Filthy Rich* continues its run until Feb 27th.)

## "Mazes and Monsters" disappointingly shallow

by Bryan Fantie

If you watched the 'made-for-TV' movie version of Rona Jaffe's *Mazes and Monsters* on ATV last night you're probably asking yourself, "What was that garbage?"

Rona Jaffe's novel caught my attention because of its obvious connection with *Dungeons and Dragons* and, most likely, that's what grabbed your eye too. Ms. Jaffe obviously used the great commercial value of the association with D&D to her advantage and bolstered her package with the publicity attracted to the real-life incident which inspired her plot.

Although the novel did manage to show a perceptive, but hardly profound, understanding of the game, it concentrated on the relationships of the characters being, in the end, a love story.

*Mazes and Monsters* is the story of Kate, Jay Jay, Daniel and Robbie, four university students who are brought together through their fascination with a fantasy role-playing game. They take their game

a step beyond the traditional and begin to fuzzle the borders between fantasy and reality.

In the novel, at least, we examine each of the characters in detail; their backgrounds and, more importantly, their feelings and

thoughts as they and their-relationships evolve.

I found the novel an amusing piece of fluff which could be read in one or two sittings. The characters were well fleshed out and the complexity of their motivations

emphasized.

The movie, in stark contrast, lacked all of this depth. Stripped of any semblance to feeling beings the characters jerked through the story. Overall, the movie was like a photo album jumping from flashy incident to flashy incident without any attempt at continuity. Only those who were there and could fill in the gaps were capable of seeing any flow.

There was so much promise. All through the book I kept thinking how well the material would translate to the screen. Unfortunately an impressive list of actors were wasted in the supporting roles which had been whittled down to cameos.

Casting of the leads was a little more questionable. Chris Makepeace (Meatballs, My Bodyguard) and Tom Hanks (late of Bosom Buddies) were good bets and, admittedly, did the best they could with what was left of the script.

I don't understand why they had blond, blue-eyed David Wallace play Daniel whose Jewishness, essential to the full understanding of his relationship to Kate, had mysteriously vanished. There was that cryptic reference to "Eat of the bitter herbs" but this only demonstrated further how disjointed and distorted things were.

The biggest mystery was the choice of Wendy Crewson as Kate. She could hardly be convincing as a young woman struggling through the final stages of emotional adolescence when she looked old enough to be dating the fathers of her male leads.

*Mazes and Monsters*, the novel, was not a classic but it did try to make a statement about people, relationships, and the ultimate fantasy game — life. The movie, on the other hand, was a superficial, awkward insult that tried to cash in on the isolated sensational incidents that merely spiced up the book.

