

It's only the Emperor's new clothes

Movie review by Gord Turtle

Eraserhead is for eraserheads. Directed by David Lynch, *Eraserhead* is the latest craze, a "cult film" shot in black and white that pretends to study alienation in post-industrial society. Some have called it a sleeper; I call it a yawner.

The *Journal* film reviewer John Dodd, in the biggest piece of garbage to appear in that paper for years, (excepting Olive Elliot's column), reviewed the film and found it intense, horrifying, brilliant, and provocative. While a bit of suspense was accidentally worked into this most egotistic movie, I cannot for the life of me discern where anything approaching intelligence came near the creation of the film.

Simply put, *Eraserhead* is the emperor's newest set of clothes. Dodd describes it as the personal vision of the director, and the film is indeed the product of one person's imagination. But that does not make it worth seeing: everyone has visions, but it takes some importance to make the vision worthwhile to others. *Eraserhead* has little importance and absolutely nothing to say.

If I want vision, I'll stay home on Good Friday and watch *The Robe* on TV. I don't want whining and

artsy, anti-art filler from a director who includes the grossest and most grotesque images he can conjure up in his film, as did Lynch. It's a dreadful mistake to confuse the grotesque with the meaningful, and the ugly people and decrepit beings in *Eraserhead* are as gratuitous as the blood in *Dirty Harry*, and equally relevant to the film.

The movie makes little sense. Henry Spencer, ostensibly a social outcast because of his appearance and introverted personality, finds he is forced to marry his girlfriend because she has given birth to what could be a child. The marriage fails because the wife cannot cope with raising a child in Henry's one-room apartment, and Henry is left holding the bag.

The term bag aptly describes their offspring. It resembles a calf with no arms or legs, with its torso wrapped in bandages. It also seems to have an adult consciousness, as evidenced in the scene where the baby laughingly mocks Henry after his unsuccessful attempt to seduce his attractive neighbor. His laugh is the most normal thing in the movie: any frat member has heard the same laugh on a Sunday morning after an "unsuccessful" Saturday night.

Throughout the movie, Spencer embarks on

mental journeys through his radiator (yes, his radiator), where he encounters a strange music hall singer, loses his head, and has his brain made into top quality erasers.

Now of course, the truly perceptive viewer will see all of this as caustic satire and bitter social comment, while the doughhead conventional wimps like myself will dismiss the film immediately. And it is here the problem begins.

How much longer will eraserheads like Lynch continue to make films like this and expect serious response? How many people like John Dodd will swallow it whole, and assume it's art? If a work of art is so elitist that it only reaches a small handful of viewers, then it's virtually meaningless.

I'm not saying that *Eraserhead* is so intelligent that its meaning will go over audiences' heads. The movie is a vacuous, pretentious collage of ugliness, possessing absolutely no intellectual or artistic virtue. It's trendy, and its appeal is directed at sophomoric arts students who spend their spare time redesigning their beards (thanks Lol and Kevin for that one).

I hope all others will see it for what it is, and quickly erase it from their minds.

This poet sounds like just another mouth

Book review by Candy Fertile

George Bowering does not, as the back cover of *Another Mouth* says, address "the events of everyday life with a sensibility so razor-sharp and fiercely imaginative that the mundane is rendered marvellous." The mundane remains the mundane and calling some of the (poems?) mundane is rather generous.

Consider a poem that consists of the line "I see the light in my eyes" repeated nine times followed by "I see blue." Or the poem "Mais Le Rien Perce": "Come over here/atomic holocaust/I want to/stick it in you/... /Ah, yes/that feels so good/do it again/like that, funnyface." Or: "A bouquet of peckers for you my dear./What you say?/I say smell that, ain't they got/a lovely bouquet?/What you say dear I can't hear you something/about love?/Yeah honey, here's some flowers."

There are some glimmers of ability in the two long poems of the collection. "Old Standards" is about lost and found love; "Poundmaker" allows the speaker to worry about Indians. These two poems are interesting because there is more to grasp than in the shorter poems but they are ultimately unrewarding experiences. Both are confusing and the forms give the reader no help in his reading. The problems of the short poems are compounded in the longer ones. Conception and execution are blurred beyond comprehension.

Between the two long poems are a group of poems about different places. The two poems about Germany contrast the effects of war. Bomb shelters and bullet holes co-exist with factories and fancy cars. "Nearing Britain" looks almost like prose and is a series of impressions on approaching England from France.

The short poem "Passport Doves" is perhaps the best of all the collection. The speaker finds pigeons all over Europe and comments on how boundaries mean nothing to them.

There are eight poems about different places in Canada and different feelings about what it is to be a Canadian. Calgary is criticized and disliked while Toronto is criticised and loved. It is again difficult to see any coherence in these poems.

The rest of the poems are on various topics and in different styles. "A Poem for High School Anthologies" considers the importance of poetry versus the silliness or futility of trying to teach it. The poem's speaker questions the meaning and placement of words. "Now you may ask yourself, what/does that symbolize, & as a matter of fact/ why does the author say what/at the end of the line." If only Bowering had

combined form and content so well in the rest of the poems.

The last item in the collection is not a poem but "A Transcanada Poetry Quiz with no Questions About Snow." There are ten multiple choice questions complete with answers. The questions are serious: the answers range from the correct to the ridiculous. For example, number five asks what is the title of Atwood's first book. The choices are: a. *The Circle Game*, b. *The Square Game*, c. *The Triangle Game* and d. *The Dating Game*.

George Bowering will be giving a reading at 12:30 p.m. Feb. 12th in AVL-3 of the Humanities Centre.

Alberta mime to appear in SUB

SUB Theatre will be presenting two evenings of Alberta Mime, February 7 & 8 at 8:00 p.m. Mime Light, and the Arete Mime Troupe will be enacting the ancient art of telling silent stories through gestures, movements, masks and music.

The Arete Mime Troupe formed four years ago in Calgary, is a highly versatile trio; Randy Birch, Kevin McKendrick, and Don Spino. By combining ideas from mask, acrobatics, magic, juggling, vaudeville, clown and traditional pantomime, the audience is treated to a high-quality performance that is both an entertaining and understandable art form.

Mime-Light, a company of two — Marlane Herklotz and Kenneth Noster — is based here in Edmonton. Classics, folk-tales and original situation comedies presented via use of mask, classic mime and humorous original interpretation has won Mime-Light the admiration of a wide audience, ranging from highly discerning critics to school children.

Tickets for the performances are \$5 for one show



Marlene Herklotz of Edmonton's Mime-Light Company.

and \$8 for two, and are on sale at SU Box Office and at all BASS outlets.

Grisman has no trouble winning an audience

Concert review by Allan Luyckfassel

David Grisman and his Quintet performed to a sold out audience at SUB Theatre last Thursday night. His music was like a cool breeze on a hot, summer day and it's hard to think that anyone could not have enjoyed the new and refreshing sounds of the "Dawg."

Grisman, the leader and main composer of the Quintet, was the emcee for the evening, introducing the songs and group members with a charming, sly sense of humor. And he did play his mandolin, delighting an audience who were equally delighted at the virtuosity of his colleagues.

It was nice to see a band perform without ego problems. Each member had his chance to solo and when not soloing was busy comping behind the others. Two long standing members of the group Todd Phillips on bass, and Tony Rice on guitar, were not present, but their places have been amply filled by Rob Wasserman and Mark O'Connor (a young musician extremely gifted on flatpick guitar and fiddle).

Filling out the Quintet and providing an excellent foil for Grisman, was Mike Marshall on second mandolin and fiddle. The fifth member of the group was fiddler Darol Anger who proved his merit in a fiddle duet with Mark O'Connor that spanned several forms of music. The empathy between the musicians was amazing: they obviously enjoyed each other's playing.

Grisman and band mainly played compositions from the last two Grisman albums. Each member showed off their own compositions, and a delightful surprise was Rob Wasserman's variation of Eddie Harris's "Freedom Jazz Dance" which he called "Freedom Bass Dance."

David Grisman's music defies categorization so he



Two virtuosos, David Grisman and Marc O'Connor. Edmonton audiences will be waiting for the return of these two and the rest of the Grisman Quintet.

calls it simply Dawg Music. It draws on jazz, country, classical and much more. Recently he has been playing with violinist Stephane Grappelli and his music is very close in sound and spirit to the original, innovative and influential Stephane Grappelli/Django Rheinhardt jazz group. The music is so catchy and melodic and swings with such ferocity that it belies the technical prowess and complex interplay that is going on

between these five musicians. But to hear is to believe and the show at SUB proved these guys know what they're doing.

The Grisman concert was very special and obviously he is connecting with his audience. His records and concerts are selling out and recognition is coming from all areas of the musical world.

All I can say about Grisman is, "Hot Dawg!"