

## Alda leads A New Life

by Scott Neily

People familiar with the late, lamented TV series *MASH* will recognize Alan Alda as the kind of actor who brings identifiable and often quirky traits into any role he plays. Such is the case with the character of Steve Giardino, portrayed by Alda in the film *A New Life*.

The movie, also written and directed by Alda, follows the post-divorce romantic explorations of two middle-aged urbanites. Steve and his wife, Jackie, played by the eternally young Ann-Margret, have reached that dreadful point in any marriage when the needs of the individual outweigh the needs of the other. Therefore, they split and cautiously venture into the haphazard world of modern relationships. The essential storyline from that point is how they make their way in an unfamiliar and sometimes amusing world of singles bars and apartment parties.

The charm of the movie lies not in Alda's irrepressible humour but in the subtle ways the

lead characters develop throughout the film, going from rigidity to flexibility. Both Steve and Jackie are forced into a new life that requires that they change and adapt before they can find the happiness they are looking for.

Alda is fortunate that his character, Steve, is so attention-grabbing; otherwise, Steve's best friend Mel (ex-Barney Miller Hal Linden) would have stolen the show. Simply put, the Salt Flats of Utah have more depth of character than he does. However, it is not hard to like the guy simply because it is so easy to judge where he's coming from. His shallowness provides a great contrast to the sassy complexities of Steve's romantic interest Dr. Kay Hutton (Veronica Hamel). Ann-Margret's character has her moments, too, especially when dealing with her weird best friend Donna (Mary Kay Place) and a sculptor-waiter nicknamed Doc (John Shea), who becomes more than just a friend to Jackie.

The strong characters are not the only reason *A New Life* is so



commendable. The subtle commentaries on relationships are accurate. True, it is unfortunate that many marriages are doomed to end in failure, but it is positive to see that some people believe life continues after a breakup. Movie viewers are lucky to have Alan Alda to remind them of such possibilities.

L to R: Hal Linden, Veronica Hamel, Alan Alda, Ann-Margret, John Shea, and Mary Kay Place.

## You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown The Peanut Theatre

by James McDowell

Charles M. Schulz would be pleased. Last week the musical *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* was performed true to the spirit of the original Peanuts Gang by the University of King's College Theatrical Society.

Poor Charlie Brown! Life is rough when all you've got is a round head, two dots for eyes, and psychopathic beagle with an imagination. This play works because it sticks to the simple, unadulterated themes of the Schulz strips: mediocrity beats failure, it's the little victories that count, and there's a universal need for security. What makes this play unique is that it is the stage adaptation of a comic strip. Playing the part of a two-dimensional, two-colour cartoon is no easy task. Much of the appeal of cartoons is the mere visual attraction of hand-drawn images. Nevertheless, what the King's Theatrical Society lacks in abstraction it more than makes up for with a surplus of performance energy.

The difficult, uncertain character of Charlie Brown is successfully played by Chris Morgan. Adrift in low self-esteem, Charlie Brown wanders from scene to scene in hopes of finding warmth and confidence. His search for security highlights the ego-bashing scenes from the original strips; the unwinnable baseball games, kite-eating trees, and delicate but disastrous moments of young love.

Like the comic strip, the scenes are only vaguely connected thematically. The strength of this play lies not in its dialogue but in its song. Despite the confines of the King's Theatre, a small five-piece band managed to wedge itself into a corner. The band's secondary role as sound effects crew is a feat especially well executed by flutist Robert Inglis and drummer Stephanie McKeown. But the real energy of the play lies in the singing. An impressive soprano voice is exercised by the ever-dominant Lucy, played by Katie Brooks. Schroeder (Scott Syms) introduces the Twenty-Minute Workout to the concert hall, and whoever thought a "stupid, spotted beagle" could sing like that — a voice far more impressive than his bark. Though the play was intended for only six characters, the King's Theatrical Society boldly doubled the size of the cast, thus effectively doubling the play's volume and variety of voices. Special mention must be made of John Ghiz' performance as Linus. A devout blanket-philiac, Ghiz waltzes through a solo daydream stint that provides bizarre hilarity, and is just plain weird!

The shifts in stage lighting are subtle and unannoying. The stage props were simple but colourful, as were the costumes. All in all, King's, a job well done. Like the chorus says, "not bad, not bad..."

However, no one can sit through a theatrical perfor-

mance at King's without noticing the dismal, pathetic state of the stage. Indeed, most bomb shelters are cheerier places. The walls are painted various shades of black, sewer pipes and wiring snake everywhere, and the audience's lawn chairs are supported on a fascinating landscape of plywood. Director Sharon Kline (*Barometer Rising* and *South Pacific*, to mention only a couple of her credits) is impressed that theatre survives at King's. She says virtually all the equipment is substandard, if not non-existent. The wiring can accommodate only a very limited number of lights, fire hazards pervade backrooms, and larger theatres can be found on submarines. Kline regards the situation as a sad dilemma. "Do you fight city hall or do you do what you can, with what you've got, in a black hole?"

The consequences of all this severely limit performance choices. King's College has neither the money nor the room for a new theatre, but there are still at least two options: it could spend the necessary cash to improve the pit, or it could move theatrical productions aboveground to the gymnasium. This latter option would risk scuff marks on the gymnasium floor and might interfere with several basketball games. In any case, it is surprising that a university so fiercely proud of its arts programs, and so beautifully graced with theatrical talent, does not give its theatrical productions more priority.

## WANTED STUDENTS WHO ARE MOVING!

Please call

Gregory C. Rendall

469-1001

Special student discounts available



VAN & STORAGE LTD.



- Wheel alignment
- Wheel balancing
- Shock absorbers
- Safety inspection (Halifax only)
- Road hazard protection plan
- Headlights aimed
- Professional sales & services

10% off service and 5% off most goods  
to all students!!

**MILLER TIRE**  
SERVICES LIMITED

OPEN: After April 7th  
Every Thursday  
until 9 p.m. (Dart. Windsor)

2678 King St.  
Halifax, N.S.  
454-7664

20 Ilsley Ave.  
Dartmouth, N.S.  
465-3733

Centennial Dr.  
Windsor, N.S.  
1-798-9551

*Ride With The Winners!*

