

ARTS

Superior spy show

The Sandbaggers
CBC, 12 PM Tuesdays

by Geoffrey Jackson

Quite by chance I stumbled upon one of the finest television programs I have seen in some time. It is called *The Sandbaggers* and it runs at the ungodly hour of 12:15 a.m. on Tuesday nights. It is very much worth the lost hour of sleep.

A "Sandbagger" is a code word used by British Intelligence to describe a spy operative, and this show concerns the workings of England's secret service. Yet to call "The Sandbaggers" just a spy show would be criminal. The plots alone are too clever and original for this show to be dismissed that lightly. I watched an episode last Tuesday and not once did the script resort to the old clichés of car chases or stagey fights. The writing had all the lucidity of a LeCarre novel and much of his flavour.

The acting is so fine that any comparable American work seems amateurish. Every scene is a jewel of precision and craft; again no clichés are to be seen.

This quality even extends to the camera work. The show is modestly shot, on small but attractive sets. Fine shooting and editing creates a high quality look. Watching this show makes you keenly aware of how poorly most T.V. shows are produced.

At first the show may take you aback as it demands concentration. The plotting is extremely intricate as is the dialogue. The producers assume that the viewer is intelligent; capable of listening to two grown men discussing real business. Nowhere do you find the cute baby talk dialogue that permeates American television. This is not a show for ten-year olds.

I cannot say more except that I recommend this program very highly. It has a silly time slot in this city. (In Calgary it runs on Sundays at ten o'clock) but it is worth staying up for.

I phoned the CBC and they told me they have received many phone calls about the show. There is only one more episode left to be shown, but they are planning to reschedule the show to a better hour this spring. So try to catch the last episode of *The Sandbaggers* and keep an eye open for it in the future.

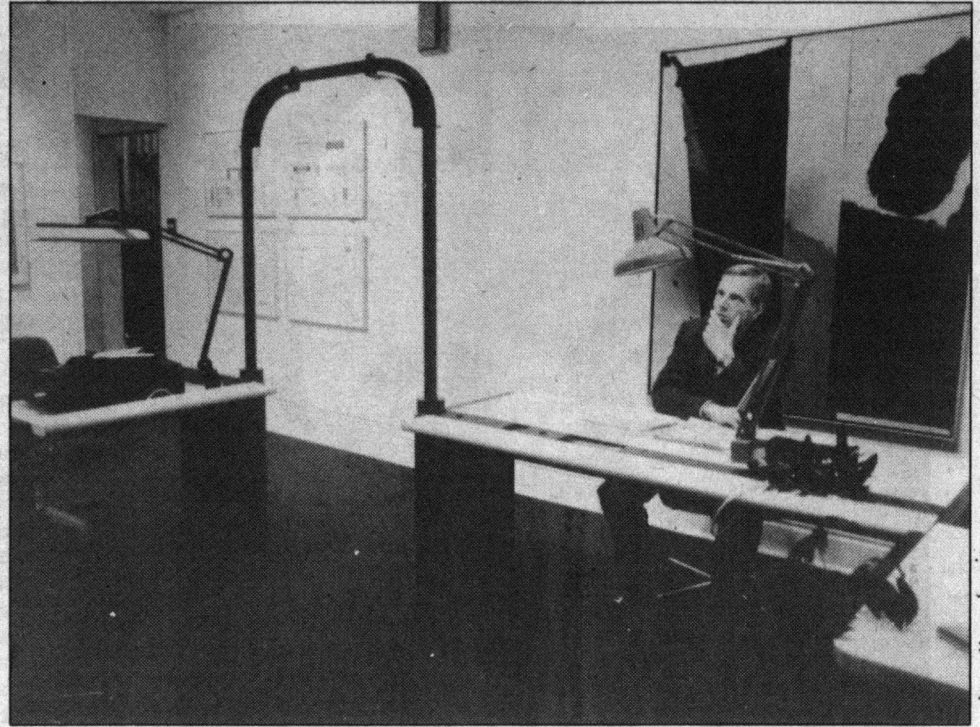


photo Peter Jarvis

The above office furniture is part of Andrew Yeung's MVA exhibit in Industrial Design showing at the Ring House Gallery until this Sunday. The furniture system is ergonomically designed for the computer age, as can be seen in the electrical hookup arch between the two desks.

technological evolution, maybe it could be altered to serve man.")

The piece of modern art on the wall, incidentally, was not perpetrated by Young but by one Otto Rogers. I imagine it is undistracting enough that it would not cause any great loss of productive man-hours in any office it was hung in.

Resident poet speaks

The University of Alberta's Writer in Residence — Pat Lane
Thursday, January 14th
AV L-3 Humanities Centre
12:30 noon

Leading off the University of Alberta's Reading Series (sponsored by the English Department and the Canada Council) will be the current Writer in Residence, Governor-General's Award-winning poet, Pat Lane. Lane won the Governor-General's Award for poetry in 1978 for his *Poems: New & Selected* (Oxford). He has since published *No Longer Two People* (Turnstone) with Lorna Uher, and *The Measure* (Black Moss).

Critic Jean Mallinson has located Lane in the tradition of emblem poetry: "although his sensibility can be located in

the context of mid-to-late twentieth century poetry — his poems are not a response to a dilemma perceived as contemporary, local, or linked to a particular historical crisis. They render, rather, his sense of the human condition as it has been and is, everywhere and always: fragility, vulnerability, on the one hand, destructiveness on the other."

She concludes her remarks on him as follows: "Patrick Lane: the poet as troubled man, his eye on the image and his ear listening for 'what runs beneath'; eavesdropper, decipherer, intent on capturing the moments when what is turns into what is said; examining the entrails of the world for meaning; bringing his poems back alive."

The reading is free and open to the public.

Yours truly, the Arts Editor, deems it peachy-keen, even though personal taste inclines him towards the Accretionist School, which holds that any office furniture is aesthetically pleasing so long as it is covered with memoranda, phone books and directories, dents, scratches, staplers, paper-clips, envelopes, flotsam, newspapers, press releases, bottles of white-out, jetsam, etc., so that one can strew oneself and one's work across it without awakening the guilty feeling that a work of art is being desecrated in the process.

The fine furniture is accompanied by scale models and explanatory posters, which are equally pleasing to the eye, although some of the theorizing is laid out on a bit thick. (Sample: "However, if our reality is prepared for the coming

Also on exhibit at Ring House until Jan. 31 is a display of Bolivian weaving: mostly ponchos, blankets and coca leaf bags. The Bolivian weaving technique is quite primitive, yet surprisingly intricate designs are produced. Details of the method employed are included with each work, and more details about Bolivian weaving and culture in general can be seen in the accompanying slide show (wherein one may be astounded by the revelation that the Bolivians probably patterned their traditional leather hats after the helmets of the conquistadors).

All in all, two intriguing exhibits, well worth the sacrifice of an idle hour. The Ring House Gallery, in case you didn't know, is immediately west of the BioSci Building.

Life imitates television

(from ITV movie listings for Dec. 17)

Tropic Zone (Par) 94 mins. C adv '53
Starring Ronald Reagan, Rhonda Fleming

*Violence and excitement as one man tries to save a banana plantation from being taken over by crooks in Tropical Central America. Based on a novel by Tom Gill.



MARK LEVITZ

Ex Libris



by Geoffrey Jackson
So here it is, *Ex Libris*, a column to call my own. My mandate is to discuss books; old books, new books, whatever. That may seem vague but it does give me a lot of breathing room. I'm hoping to be able to talk about some books that I think people would be interested in reading if they were aware of them.

This first column I will devote to one of the best works I have ever read, *The Alexandria Quartet*, by Lawrence Durrell. In the brief space I have here I hope to convey how marvelous this tetralogy is.

It is made up of four novels: *Justine*, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive*, and *Clea*. Together these novels create a masterpiece of structure and character depiction.

Justine relates a story of a young writer living in Alexandria just before the Second World War. The city itself is almost a character; mysterious, hot, and feminine. Alexandria is an exotic blend of east and west. There the young writer falls in love with three women; Justine (mysterious, cryptic), Melissa (tender, loving), and Clea (insightful, intelligent). He makes friends with Purswarden (brilliant, cynical), Nessim (fastidious, dangerous), and Balthazar (wise, perceptive). Between these people is created an intricate and engrossing story of loves, friendships, and hatreds.

Justine tells a story and tells it well. Every nuance of the complicated encounters between the writer and his friends is captured.

In the second novel, *Balthazar* retells the very same story but from another viewpoint. This is a revelation. Hidden dimensions of people are revealed and the effect is anything but repetitive.

Mountolive, the third novel passes over these same events yet again, this time from the distant viewpoint of the British Counsel to Alexandria. His detached observations of events gives further insights into these people.

These divergent viewpoints merge together to create very real characters. For me, Clea, Justine, Purswarden, et al became living, breathing people. Looking back over these three books I could not say where one begins and another ends. They have fused together as a solid whole in my mind.

When I reached the fourth book, where a chronological jump ahead is made, I was totally engrossed in the work. I felt sorrow when one of these people suffered; I could not turn the pages fast enough when one was in danger.

Durrell writes with a strong, precise, and beautiful command of the language. I read the *Quartet* with a dictionary at hand because he uses a very erudite vocabulary. This is not academic grandstanding. In looking up a word, one realizes that the word says exactly what Durrell means.

The total effect is breathtaking. Durrell has gotten close to the heart of art here. By his careful choice of viewpoints and his subtle revelations of character he has created very real and fascinating people. The books are beautifully written and will reward concentration handsomely.