

*Eliot's 'play of words'*

# Stylized Murder hits low notes at Glendon

By IAN BALFOUR

This year's production of the Glendon Dramatic Arts Programme, of T.S. Eliot's *Murder In The Cathedral*, was a very uneven one. One was struck by both the embarrassingly poor acting and the very impressive technical aspects of the production.

It must first be noted that the Glendon theatre group is an amateur one, and for many of the actors, this was a first time on stage. Their sheer ambition must be admired; in their seven-year history, they have presented such plays as *Hamlet*, *Oedipus Rex* and other classics. The choice of Eliot's verse tragedy is equally ambitious. Unfortunately, it was precisely the

special dramatic problems that *Murder In The Cathedral* poses that the Glendon production was not able to cope with satisfactorily.

*Murder In The Cathedral* is, above all, a play of words. The action of the Thomas Becket story, as Eliot renders it, is sketchy at best. The play's power resides in its

language, from the strong archetypal symbols which it employs, to the Brecht-like alienating effects, made possible through the blending of renaissance and modern language.

With the exception of some well-orchestrated passages by the chorus of Canterbury women, the

actors demonstrated little understanding of Eliot's poetry. The words became awkward and stilted in the actors' mouths, and all sense of rhythm was lost. Among the priests who attend Becket, the concept of characterization seemed completely foreign.

All the non-acting aspects of the production, however, were most satisfying. Caroline Gregory's costumes were superb, the equal of any professional production I have seen in Toronto. David Weatherston's set showed a resourceful use of space and the different spatial levels well suited the action of the play. The audio aspects of the play, both the music and the singing, were excellently handled and, together with the set, a very fertile

environment was created within which the play could take shape.

With few exceptions, the movement under Michael Gregory's direction was quite stylized. This is a reasonable approach to Eliot's play, but it places an extra burden on the language, a burden which the actors were unfortunately not able to bear.

## Ill wind crashes novel

By DOUG TINDAL

J.G. Ballard is having us on. Ballard's *The Wind from Nowhere* (first printed in 1962 and recently re-released by Penguin) involves a pathetic struggle for survival — the human race pitted against the implacable ravages of a powerful global wind.

The wind never lets up, but sweeps around the world with a steadily increasing force.

At 95 miles per hour, business as usual is no longer possible; at 115, buildings start to collapse, driving the people underground; at 220, double-decker buses roll through the barren streets like beach balls.

We are introduced to a plethora of characters, coping with the wind with mixed degrees of physical and

psychological success.

Along the way, they provide healthy doses of pathos and romance. There are even some thoroughly contemptible characters who allow us the cleansing experience of cathartic hatred.

When the wind speed reaches 550 miles per hour, it has swept the earth clean of all human artifacts, has killed all but four of our friends, the protagonists, and then — it stops.

There is no reprieve from heaven, the extra-terrestrials Ballard has been hinting at throughout the book aren't really there, it just stops, as does the novel, leaving four people on a completely desolate earth.

Like I said, we've been had.



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## Led Zeppelin overwhelms, Graffiti drive relentless

By JEFFREY MORGAN

Just when you need them the most, Led Zeppelin comes thundering back with a new label (Swan Song), a new publishing company (Joaneline), and most important of all, a new album, and a double one at that. For Zeppelin this is first.

Jimmy Page, ex-Yardbird the world's best lead guitar technician ever, and Robert Plant, still the world's most powerfully distinctive voice, have returned to the vinyl fold once more, along with Jones and Bonham, to extoll over 80 minutes of Mediaeval Magic and Heavy Metal Madness, all under the collective title of *Physical Graffiti*.

*Physical* isn't the word for it. Considering the sheer relentless driving force that's sustained over the four sides, it would be more

appropriate to call it 'brutal'.

Owing more to Led Zeppelin Three than Houses Of The Holy, *Physical Graffiti* has a certain laid-back quality to it, that asks of the listener gentle patience and repeated listenings.

On the plus side, there are the standard straight-forward Zep rockers like *Wanton Song*, *The Rover and Sick Again*, nicely fitting into the mold set by such earlier Bendo Classics as *Black Dog*, *Immigrant Song* and *The Crunge*.

In *My Time Of Dying* (a revamped 'original' that could easily pass as Led Zep's answer to the Velvet Underground's *Heroin*) starts out very slowly building up to a static critical paranoia ending some eleven minutes later. There's also *Kashmir*, which is almost as long, and sounds like it's been taken directly from an Arabian Nights movie.

Plant's voice, while not quite as manic as on the past five albums, has rounded out for the better by adding a dimension of depth and fullness to each song. Meanwhile, the combined efforts of John Paul Jones and John Bonham reinforce the fact that, along with Moon and Entwistle of The Who, they are still one of the most powerful teams currently working in rock today.

*Physical Graffiti* is probably the most complex work that Led Zeppelin have undertaken to do yet, and is an album that will take some getting used to. Despite what the critics may say now, within the upcoming six to eight months *Physical Graffiti* will be called the best and most ambitious album of the year, and rightly so.

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