

Fritz the cat

Watching Ralph Bakshi struggle with *Fritz the Cat* reminds one of the story of the spider who failed to spin a web twelve times but succeeded on the thirteenth. Fritz never does make it off the ground.

Bakshi tries to capture the entire youth movement of the '60's with Fritz (created by Robert Crumb in Head comics) as the anti-hero seeking new things out of life. In Fritz's words "I've beat many a good man, and laid many a good woman, but there's something missing."

At the beginning of this feature length cartoon, we follow Fritz and his friends through an orgy in a bathtub, which is busted by the police, who are drawn as porcupine members of the animal community. On the run from the law, Fritz takes a crack at getting the feeling of the black movement. In the sequence of events, he manages to steal a car and destroy it, almost dies at the hands of a black bartender he unwisely addresses as 'boy', incites a race riot by calling upon slum-dwellers to 'shake off their oppressors', and to top things off, has his virility ridiculed by a hooker. Fritz finally decides to split for the coast to check out what's happening, runs into a group of "revolutionaries" who're going to blow up a power plant, discovers too late that they're only destroying for the sake of destruction. This realization hits him at the very moment he watches the dynamite intended for blowing up the plant explode in his hands.

The reason I found the film frustrating is because it has a great deal of potential it failed to achieve. Bakshi starts every scene out as a beautiful social satire, but somehow, the scenes fall flat. There is no real

continuity. The entire film could have been a beautiful take off on the entire youth movement of the '60's, but Bakshi is torn between satire and slapstick, he can never quite decide which medium to use. Beautiful vignettes of street life in New York are boorishly interrupted by Bakshi's obsession with crude ways to show people urinating.

Fritz is a character one can sympathize with. He is a product of his time, caught up in a whirlwind which he is unable to handle. This is displayed in a scene where he burns all his books, then realizes too late that he can't study for an exam. We also have the three women in his life, who try to keep his head from wandering through everything there is to experience. Ignoring them, he ends up in the power plant fiasco.

One of the few saving graces of this picture is the excellent animation. All the characters, drawn as various animals, still manage to capture very human emotions in their faces. Bakshi

combines the best of the worlds of animation and reality to blend a skilful potpourri of images, ranging from spotlighting a figure on an otherwise black screen to a full scale riot on the streets. The special effects are handled very professionally. As far as the actual drawing goes, the more explicit parts of the body are just vague enough to avoid censorship.

Basically, a potentially powerful satirical comment on the youth of the '60's which somehow never quite made it.

My friend remarked at the end of the show that it was the first programme she's seen where the films came first and the cartoon last. The shorts were a cut above the usual NFB material and deserve mention. First was a film entitled *Mirrors of Venus*, by someone with the unlikely name of Wingate Paine. It utilized camera work and music in portraying three young ladies in various nude poses, with a brief statement at the start saying 'These are creatures of the wild, to be tamed and set free again,' referring to the women. I had visions of Paine fluttering through pastoral meadows seeking women to

tame and make wild again. Although the film was rather ridiculous, some of the poses appeared to be funny in a grotesque sort of way. This was explained as the final credits rolled: "Arrangements by Federico Fellini." Certainly an unexpected place to find him.

The second feature was a beautiful sketch about two people on a commuter train in New York. A neat, tidy man sat next to a young lady on the train as she proceeded to make

herself up, spilling powder and discarding hair all over him. When she is finally made up, she even sports a red wig. The man eventually light a cigarette and the young lady points to a 'no smoking' sign. The sketch ends as he blows a mouthful of smoke into her face.

Generally, an interesting evening, and one should see Fritz to see just how Crumb's cartooning has been portrayed on the screen. Then again, you might be better off reading Fritz the Cat comics.

the THEATRE 3 Box Office at 424-3488.

About the cast-

Bill Meilen: has been an actor since his first professional engagement in British Repertory in 1947. He worked in theatre, radio, television and films on a regular basis both as actor and dramatist until his arrival in Canada in 1969 to take up a post at the U of A Drama Department where he is a dialect specialist. His recent work includes the scripting, narration and direction of a five part series for CFRN-TV, *THE COMPLETE ACTOR*, THEATRE 3 audiences will remember him as M. Pierre in last year's production of *INVITATION TO A BEHEADING*.

Gilly Brand: first came to the stage as an actress and director in her hometown of Newcastle on Tyne. Although she has been absent from the stage for several years now, she will no doubt be remembered for her many fine performances at Walterdale. She recently returned to the stage to take the role of the Wife of Bath in the Studio Theatre production *CANTERBURY TALES*. This is Gilly's first appearance with THEATRE 3, and we are pleased to welcome her to our company.

Gloria Perks: trained in England at the Northern School of Music and received NSM Drama award for most outstanding student. She is a Licentiate of the Guildhall

School of Music and Drama. Her major performing roles include *St. JOAN? JOAN OF THE STOCKYARDS*, *QUEEN CYMBELINE*, *Beatrice SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS*; *Bernarda HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA*; *Medea MEDEA*; *Mary Magdalene THE VIRGIL* for THEATRE 3 *Inez NO EXIT*; *Solange THE MAIDS*; and *Cecilia C INVITATION TO A BEHEADING*.

Mark Schoenberg - Director - : Artistic Director and co-founder of THEATRE 3, Mark has extensive experience as a director. He has been executive producer at five theatres, has directed four off-Broadway plays, including the widely acclaimed *ALL THE KING'S MEN*, as well as producing and directing numerous community theatre, university and acting-school productions. Mark has been an Edmonton resident for five years.

Karen Waidmann - Designer - : Karen has just completed her M.A. in design at Southern Illinois University where she designed such productions as *RING AROUND THE MOON*, *MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN*, and *THIEVES CARNIVAL*. Other work includes lighting design at the Opera Workshop at Brevard, North Carolina, and design on such productions as *MUSIC MAN* and the premiere production of the opera *CYRANO de BERGERAC*.

Theatre 3 will open

Rehearsals are now in full swing for THEATRE 3's first production of the year, Harold Pinter's *OLD TIMES*, under the direction of Mark Schoenberg, THEATRE 3's Artistic Director. The play is rapidly coalescing into a tight and compelling drama which will keep Edmonton audiences riveted to their seats until the final curtain.

OLD TIMES is Harold Pinter's latest play, a complex and absorbing investigation of memory and reality. The delicacy, precision and psychological depth of Pinter's writings make a formidable

challenge to both the cast and the audience. In Dr. Schoenberg's words, *OLD TIMES* is "one of the greatest plays ever written....he's captured everything in modern life - the relationships, the malaise, the kinkiness, everything".

In the cast for *OLD TIMES* are Gloria Perks as Kate, Gilly Brand as Anna, and Bill Meilen as Deely.

OLD TIMES opens in the Centennial Library Theatre on October 17th and runs until Oct. 29th. For reservations and season ticket information, call

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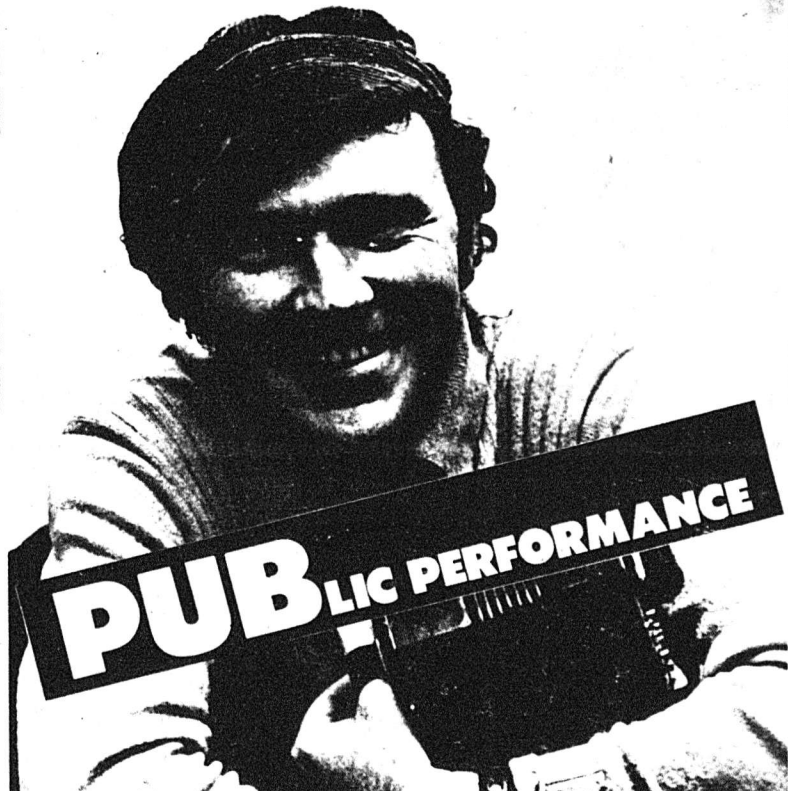
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