

It's those darling-killer eyes...

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Garneau Theatre

You know the kind of guy - he's the guy who stands up in the cafeteria and yells: "This food stinks!" And right away you know he's crazy, right?

Maybe.

Randall Patrick McMurphy is that kind of guy. A brawler, a clown, a born organizer, all wrapped up and acted by a roly-poly Jack Nicholson in Milos Forman's film of Ken Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. McMurphy has an added quirk - an incurable distaste for work prisons, where he's been incarcerated off and on for assault and statutory rape. So he feigns insanity and draws a rest in a bona fide cuckoo's nest, an Oregon asylum for the insane.

McMurphy comes in screaming sane, slaps a brief spark into the whimpering souls who crawl the walls there, and goes down swinging and laughing. In *Cuckoo's Nest*, Nicholson has reached a second perfection in that type of role - (remember Bad-ass Budsky from *The Last Detail*?). It's those darling-killer eyes of his; the energy that coils between uproarious fun and cold outrage. Kesey's character McMurphy is an embodiment of every silent courageous wish in every heart; on the screen Nicholson elevates Kesey's vision through a convincing, volatile performance.

McMurphy descends into a platoon of misfits that would intrigue Fellini. They're a squirming lot; who prey on each other's exposed frailties to shore up their own weaknesses. McMurphy catalyzes then - he wins every cigarette in the ward playing blackjack, calling each down card as he deals; he

stages his own mock World Series when the television is turned off. But most important, he unites the patients against the source of their misery - the domination of Nurse Ratched (Louise Fletcher), machine-incarnate and bitch-supreme, who emasculates each man in turn without cracking a smile. The ward is her baby (as Kesey suggested, though the film doesn't bring this out). Fletcher's performance is horribly, wonderfully controlled - Nurse Ratched simply IS. She's as much a prison to the patients as the walls of the asylum - and the film's analogy, of course, is intended to be direct.

However, the film doesn't approach the metaphorical impact of Kesey's book - perhaps wisely, it doesn't try. Nurse Ratched is never referred to as Big Nurse and the connection with Orwell's Big Brother is ignored. And the spectre of shock treatment and lobotomy should have been better foreshadowed to heighten McMurphy's daring, but it wasn't. When those scenes came, however, they were devastating. It's almost as though Lawrence Hauben and Bo Goldman wrote the screenplay on the assumption that their audience would know the story's metaphors, and thus were lax in this regard. Still, there are amusing touches - a cripple who persists in flying the Stars and Stripes from his wheelchair. And the presence of a school-bus, along with Nurse Ratched's maddeningly reasonable voice in therapy sessions, makes for a wry connection between thought-control and education.

But although the film's inattention to Kesey's wider intent mars it as a thorough-going work, it surpasses the book in its immediate impact. It attains the echoing reality un-

iversally linked with hospitals, and draws painfully stark pictures of the patients' broken psyches under the dissection of Nurse Ratched. All of the patients are superbly cast and acted (one looks enjoyably like Bob Haldeman, Nixon's former aides). No book will ever stutter as pitifully as Oscar nominee Brad Dourif, who briefly overcomes his sexual hangups in the company of McMurphy's tonic lunacy. And there's the simple visual presence of Chief Bromden (Will Sampson), the giant Indian who plays deaf and

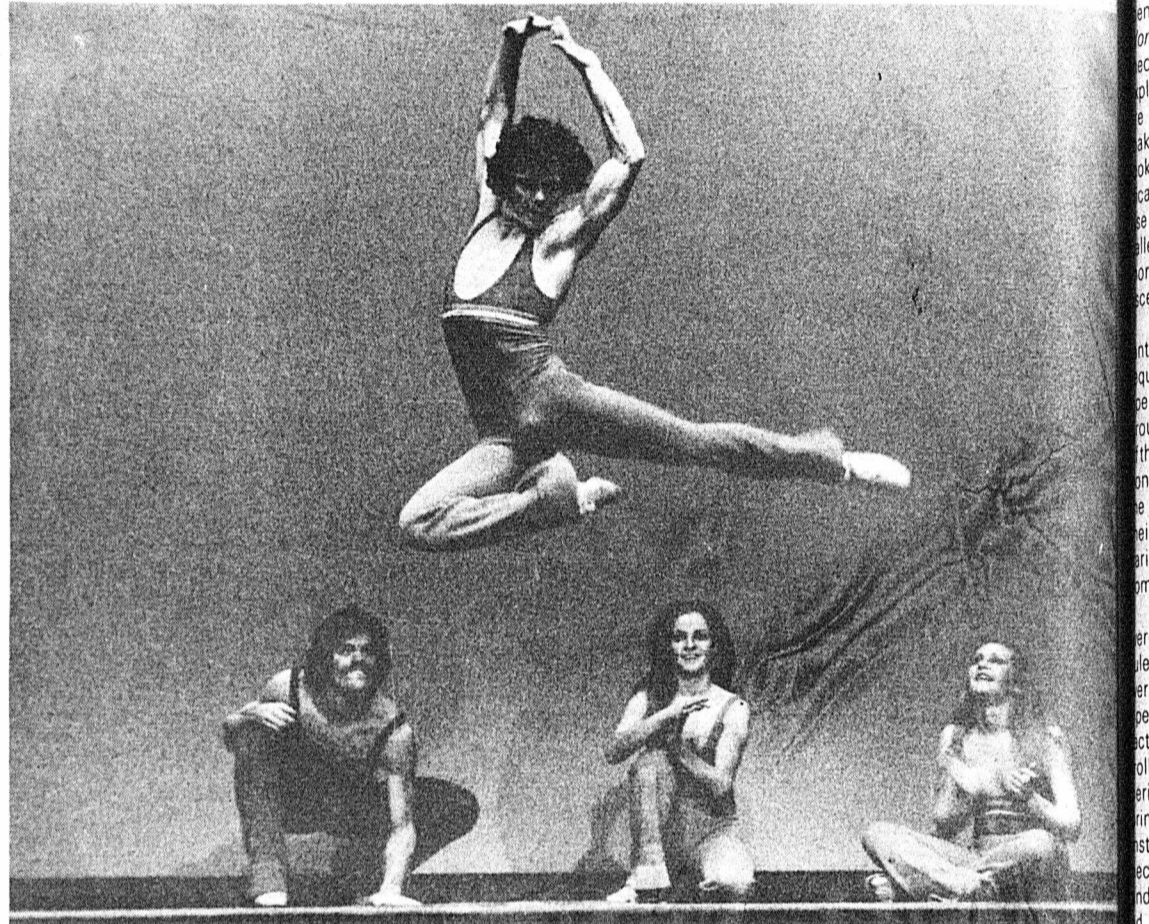
dumb until McMurphy rouses him.

Cuckoo's Nest touches a deep sympathy in portraying McMurphy's exploits - so it's truly unfortunate that a film this good was ended as poorly as it was. McMurphy loses his fight - he's lobotomized. Its a crushing snuffing-out of the human spirit. Chief Bromden mercifully suffocates him, and the tragedy is complete - but then the glad-and-glorious music swells up as the Chief uproots a plumbing fixture and breaks out of the asylum. Its an inspiring mo-

ment, and the legacy is genuine but is a Hollywood ending at the expense of the tragedy of McMurphy's martyrdom.

The film's cleverest moment? - at least from a student standpoint, it has to be when McMurphy hijacks a fishing boat by introducing the patients to the proprietor as the advisory staff of the asylum: "This is Dr. Cheswick, I'm Dr. McMurphy." All the patients nodded and looked very stern ... and I looked peculiarly like a scene at the Faculty Club ...

by Don Truckey



Jazz Ballet inspired

Fours years is a short time in the development of a dance company, but in such a period Les Ballets Jazz has succeeded in establishing itself as an important addition to Canada's growing dance scene.

The founding of Les Ballets Jazz was largely the organizational work of Genevieve Salbaing, a former dancer. Mrs. Salbaing supplies the business and administrative acumen, while Eva von Gencsy - who is also head of the Jazz Department at Banff School of Fine Arts - concentrates on the artistic direction and development of the company. Von Gencsy started her own school

in Montreal in 1962. Ten years later, Les Ballets Jazz developed out of the school.

The company of 13 dancers - most of them Canadian born - draws its inspiration from the rhythms of today's jazz forms and its repertoire duplicates in no way the work of other Canadian companies.

Les Ballets Jazz has performed in Montreal and toured extensively. In the summer of 1975 it was honored by an invitation from Maurice Bejart to take part in the International Dance Festival in Venice. The glowing reviews of its performance there by European dance critics occupy a promi-

nent place in the company's scrapbook. In July 1976 Les Ballets Jazz will perform at Expo Theatre during the Olympics.

The Program to be seen at the Students' Union Theatre (March 12 and March 13 at 8 p.m.) consists of three new works and two from the company's repertoire. *Up There and Jazz Sonata* (especially choreographed for the Venice Festival by Eva von Gencsy) will open and close the evening. New works by Alain Ferrie *Flas* and *Syncope*, and *Hommage to Duke* (Ellington) choreographed by Richard Jones, occupying the centre portion of the evening.

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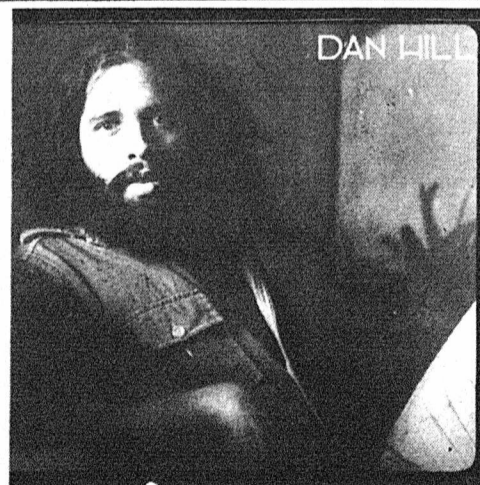
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A Students' Union Theatre presentation

Choir springs concert

On Saturday, March 20th, the University of Alberta Concert Choir will perform its annual spring concert. This performance will include works ranging from those of the "masters" to recent settings of Canadian folk songs.

The U of A Concert Choir was formed seven years ago by the late R.S. Eaton to be the official choir of the Department of Music. The choir, whose membership is now approximately sixty, has only two prerequisites for membership - a small audition and a great desire to sing.

Besides performing at its spring concert, the choir sings on numerous other occasions. These take place at hospitals, conventions, churches, and at

university functions, such as the Exploration Series of concerts.

The Choir has made television and radio appearances and traditionally makes a record every year.

The Concert choir also takes its music to the communities of Alberta after final exams by way of a spring tour.

The Spring Concert will be held in Convocation Hall on March 20. The performance will begin at 8:00 p.m. and tickets will be \$2.00. Special rates are provided for school groups and children under 12 are admitted free.

For more information contact choir director Professor Larry Cook at the Dept. of Music, U of A.



U of A Concert Choir