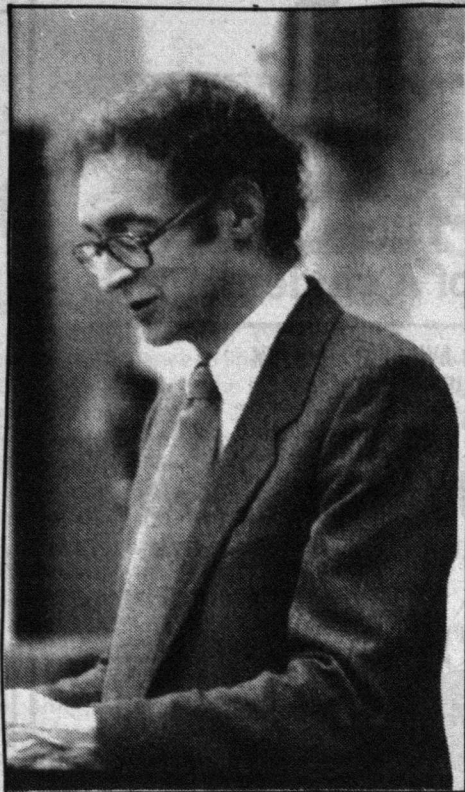


Adventure, intrigue and sex in 14th century



Matt Cohen, author of *The Spanish Doctor*.

The Spanish Doctor
Matt Cohen
 McClelland and Stewart

review by Geoff Jackson

Matt Cohen, one of Canada's more respected novelists, has written an historical novel of adventure, intrigue, sex, and violence. What he has not done is given anyone a clear idea of just how seriously we are supposed to take this book.

It is not a dull read. The hero doctor, Avram Halevi, is constantly racing from one disaster to another, wielding scalpels at one moment and swords at the next. In his travels he gets to leap into bed with lots of buxom ladies in medieval dress, pausing occasionally to ponder a bit about the misfortunes of being a Jew in fourteenth century Europe.

McClelland and Stewart tell us that this book is a fully realized novel. They would have been more honest if they had called it a highly saleable novel.

If Matt Cohen were some run-of-the-mill writer, then perhaps I could accept the book as the sort of thing you like to read on the bus: quick, florid, and easy on the eyes. But Matt Cohen is not just run-of-the-mill. His Salem novels are considered to be writing of a high standard. Very little in *The Spanish Doctor* could be similarly praised.

Photo: Tim Kubash

As a book dealing with the mood and temper of the high Middle Ages, I found it very unconvincing. It is not so much that the actual facts related are wrong, they are quite accurate. Mr. Cohen has done some homework and he has got the basics down, but very little seems new or fresh. It is the sort of stuff you used to find in those books, "Everyday Life In...". The characters are never convincing as people from another time and world.

One could argue that people are not really all that different now than then but somehow I remain sceptical of that thesis. The whole sensibility of the book feels very modern. Avram Halevi keeps dropping in like a

medic from MASH to solve all sorts of ills. All the love relationships have a distinct soapy flavour. And worst of all, the highly tragic persecution of the Jews by the Inquisition seems to become at times nothing more than a colourful backdrop for the skillful swordplay of the hero.

This is a historical novel in the tradition of the MGM epic with all the extras in polyester/rayon costumes and the actors trying to look at ease in their aluminum armor. It could be considered harmless fun, but certainly not anything to be taken seriously.

Let's hope Mr. Cohen does not find it necessary to write more books such as this one.

Junior filmmakers get involved

by Ross Gordon

Thursday night last week marked the inception of the new U of A Film Co-op at the University of Alberta. A meeting was held in 142 SUB to elect an executive, or at least ratify an already present executive, learn what the Co-op is all about and view a film: the ever classic *Nightfall* starring Aldo Ray and Anne Bancroft.

Open to students and non-students, the co-op was created to provide an opportunity for budding film and video makers to draw from a pool of equipment and experience that otherwise might be inaccessible. Per-

sons interested in all facets of filmmaking will be gathering on projects to gain experience and perhaps produce something of substance. Workshops will be held in which members and visiting lecturers will explain the technical side of the craft.

The Co-op promises to provide a venue for the screening of alternative films, student made and otherwise, in a social atmosphere. The first gathering falls on Nov. 16 (Friday) at 7:00 pm in room 270 of SUB. Guests and new members are welcome for the viewing of noted film *The Lusty Men* starring Robert Mitchum; beer and wine will be available.

TRIVIA ENTERTAINMENT

by Don Tepfyske

Maybe last week's contest was too easy. Or maybe a brand new record wasn't enough. All right, then, this week we'll really test you trivia freaks, and we'll up the ante to two (that's right, two) brand new, untouched, state of the art records. And you can have the weekend to think about it — entry deadline is noon Tuesday.

MUSIC

1. Who is Steve Brookes?
2. Robert Smith was simultaneously a member of two British bands. One was The Cure. What was the other?
3. The latest Ramones album is produced by T. Erdelyi. By what name is T. Erdelyi better known?
4. Rachel Sweet, Devo, and The Waitresses all originated in the same city. Name that city.

MOVIES

5. In which Bill Forsyth movie did Clare Grogan star?
6. *Vertigo* and *The Rear Window* were directed by the same man, and they both starred the same actor. Who were the two men?
7. Which singing sisters starred in Abbot and Costello's *Hold That Ghost*?

TELEVISION

8. What actor portrayed Buck Rogers in the late 1970's?
9. What character did Tinal Louise portray in a 1960's comedy? Name the show.

On and around campus

SU Theatre, Nov. 12: The Chinese Magic Review. Acrobatics, magic, kung fu, extraordinary feats of physical agility. Great entertainment for the whole family. (In a charitable gesture, the SU has donated 80 tickets to this show to the Boys and Girls Club.) Tickets at BASS.

Youth With a Mission will be presenting *Toymaker & Son (An Allegory)*, next Tuesday, Nov. 13, at 12:30 (noon) at the SU Theatre. *Toymaker* is a unique fusion of dance, drama and mime.

Tommorow night (Friday), Tory Theatre, 8:00: the Edmonton Film Society will be showing the 1956 classic *The Girl Can't Help It*, with Jayne Mansfield, Tom Ewell, and such 50's rock stars as The Platters, and Little Richard. Tickets \$4 at the door.



Jayne Mansfield stars in *The Girl Can't Help It*.

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CLASSES

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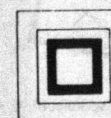
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