

'Chapter Two' well bound

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How sweet it is - and how subtly bitter, this satirical yet warm view of the death of the playwright's wife and his subsequent remarriage to a young actress - *Chapter Two* in the life of Neil Simon. For those familiar with Simon's previous comedys, *The Goodbye Girl* and *California Suite*, several facets of his style carry a distinct pattern in *Chapter Two*.

Simon writes about people - how they touch each other, how they hurt each other. The play currently showing at The Playhouse involves a strength of human contact that can only be drawn from genuine experience and emotional perception. The characters on stage portray realistic involvement with each other and throw this contact over the entire audience. We are not permitted to merely sit and watch, but must react and feel. Feelings however, are not of a sorrowful nature, despite the subject matter. The furthest one is pulled in this direction is quiet melancholy. The major response was open hearted laughter. The humour was not a third party analysis but a first person feeling - a significant indication of true comedy. Simon misses few opportunities to combine words and actions into comic enjoyment. His technique is simple and one need not be a wordy, well-read individual to understand the wit.

Part of the joy of *Chapter Two* is its obvious repulsion with the Harlequin-type romance. The characters are not reeking of physical perfection, practiced aristocratic speech or pas-

sion for danger and intrigue. They are almost ordinary people with a splash of neurotic stage appeal thrown in. The actors were convincing in their portrayal of Simon's creations. Tom Crawley, playing George Schneider transcended from cool, well-pressed exterior to the torn, unsteady novelist hidden inside. His face was one of a mature man with child's eyes. His foil, brother Les, portrayed by Michael Donaghue was the habitual yet tacky lover who never fell in love. Puffing on a cigar, belly straining on the Hollywood press agent suit, his most appealing characteristic was his crooked smile. Pat Phillips belted out some of the loudest, nastiest retorts and strangest statements in the scripts. Her small stature only emphasized her cynicism more and her demeanour was strictly class. Even feigning drunkenness, her strengths and vulnerabilities were well matched and finely portrayed. I feel she carried her lead role, George's new romance Jennie Malone, with expertise. Janelle Hutchison, Jennie's sidekick on stage, brought a taste of slapstick to the play. Always the jester, the centre of attention and the life of the party. I will always remember her as the spoiled and incredibly vocal Jewish woman in *Eight to the Bar*. TNB production staff chose their cast wisely.

The set and costume design complemented the actor's roles well. From the mature sophisticated apartment and attire of George to the cozy and artistic design of the single career woman Jennie.

Chapter Two is definitely a smash hit, defined as expert-



"YOU WANT TO SEE WHITE BREAD THAT TURNED INTO PUMPER-NICKEL ALL BY ITSELF?" Leo Schneider, played by Michael Donaghue (left) is horrified by the situation in his brother George's apartment. George Schneider, portrayed by Tom Crawley, has just returned from Europe. The scene is from TNB's production of the Neil Simon romantic comedy CHAPTER TWO, directed by Malcolm Black. (Don Johnson photo)

ly written, directed and acted out without allowing the expertise to stand out as

a separate entity from the pure enjoyment of rich comedy.

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the air, introduces many of the songs of the group. Bunny Cunningham on the keyboards provides a nice back-up on each song and is most memorable when he sings a sweet lead on a couple of the group's original tunes.

The group "pays tribute" to the top reggae stars - Bob Marley, Buring Spear, Jimmy Cliff and the Heptones. But I feel that it is the original tunes, roots sounds that are the real forte of the group. Such songs as "Sufferation", "We Want Freedom" and "Peace and Love" stand out in my mind as first rate reggae. Another excellent song that sums things up in this

town is "The Weed Situation" in which Wally Morgan moans aloud.

"The Weed situation very rough, "Talkin 'bout the Weed situation

getting tough" Inna Fred-rick-ton, Fred'rick Ton!!"

How true this is in these desparate times..just the sight of Ross Clive pointing a spiritual finger into the crowd and yelling "I-RIE Fred-rick-ton...Peace, love and marijuana!" is a sight I will have a hard time forgetting. Even the sight of people dancing with reggae-inspired abandon and love is one anyone who was at the Arms last

weekend will remember for some time.

The group was excellent and one can only hope that the material they played at the Arms will soon be available to the people on record. As drummer Morgan explained to me the crowd was able to enjoy itself without resorting to infantile

fits of violence through simply "Jah's love..." Now if only more of this spirit of *Bloodfire* could penetrate into N.B. we might all be headed towards more harmony and real freedom. Irie *Bloodfire* we welcome you back at any time!

tnb

Theatre New Brunswick
Theatre Nouveau Brunswick

TNB's Valentine to Fredericton

CHAPTER TWO

A Comedy by
NEIL SIMON

Starring.....
Tom Crawley
Michael Donaghue
Janelle Hutchison
Pat Phillips

At The Playhouse
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