

Joseph's Dreamcoat delightful despite delay

by **Maven Gates**

Well, the much publicized **Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat** finally arrived, camel and all. Once things got rolling the spectacle was everything that was promised. However, when the cast and crew accepted the nearly impossible mission they had no idea that the big script written in the sky would read as it did Friday, November 19.

Directors have nightmares about opening nights like this. It is twenty minutes after the time when the curtain was scheduled to have been raised and the audience has not yet been admitted into the theatre. Choking the second floor lobby an ever-swelling mass of anxious patrons wait; surprisingly patient. A bearded man finally cracks under the strain. "Those with tickets to the right: those without to the left! That's your right...my left...I think." Confusion. Mass hysteria can not be far behind. Suddenly the doors swing open, just in time, and the crowd rolls forward.

How did this all happen? Why was there such a long delay? Apparently a backdrop had refused to budge when the stagecrew tried to raise it so the rebellious piece of scenery had to be rolled up manually and pinned to the top of the curtain.

Why had this not been discovered during the dress rehearsal? Good question. Unfortunately there never really had been a proper dress rehearsal due to technical snags. Whoever decided to rent out the theatre to house luncheons for the three days before the opening of the production deserves the lion's share of the responsibility for the foul-ups. This poorly calculated and inconsiderate piece of scheduling prevented the last stages of set construction from proceeding without panic and delivered a rather insensitive knock to a tremendously complicated piece of machinery that required most of its energy and attention just to ensure that all of its pieces stayed together.

However, as the backdrop was no longer going to be used in the show that night, I think that the audience should have been allowed to take their seats while the work was in progress. An explanation would still have been necessary but much of the discomfort would have been avoided.

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat was a herculean task for any first-time producer and director. Glenn Walton should be very proud of the job he has done. His inexperience only really showed around the edges of the production.

The beginning was too slow and employed a device reminiscent of *The Wizard of Oz* that would be much more effective and appropriate in a movie rather than on a stage. At the other end the finale was less than explosive. Of course, Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber should bear most of the blame but I think Mr. Walton could have used some of his creative juices to great effect here.

Eric Emmanuele's choreography kept the stage swirling and pulsing with life. Using movement rather than oils he painted with bold, exciting strokes that were as interesting in detail as they were dynamic in overall effect. What the actors lacked in expertise as dancers they compensated for with bright, energetic enthusiasm. Casting was uniformly good and the costumes were simple but clever.

Technical production was quite another matter. The spotlights were atrocious. I sometimes wondered if the operators had ever seen the show before. Soloists sang from the dark while the great circle of light stayed agonizingly trained on someone else. Puzzling blackouts occurred bars before the end of numbers. Often the light would search frantically for some target to focus on. And, even when a subject was firmly encircled, there was a disturbing amount of jiggling going on.

Microphones should have been used more frequently by the princi-

pals. The acoustics in the McInnes Room are just not adequate for unamplified voice particularly when it is competing with an orchestra. It will only take four or five performances to make the hardest voice hoarse under these conditions, and **Joseph** is scheduled for ten.

Music was supplied by a competent seven piece band. With the exception of the overture, in which the bass guitar was out of tune, their performance was excellent. When the curtains opened in the second half of the first act we got to see the instrumentalists and what a sight they were. Carefully arranged up and around the steps of the pyramids our be-fezzed musicians formed a truly comedic vision.

Bruce Thompson handled the role of Joseph with great poise. His voice, smooth and pleasant,

gathered strength as the show unfolded: eventually returning full circle to gentleness for "Any Dream Will Do" - the closing number. There was a surprising "openness" in his execution of this song which reminded us all of our vulnerability. Mr. Thompson's genuine honesty constantly reassured us that Joseph's brothers had surely been wrong to let their jealousy confuse naiveté with conceit.

Peter MacDonald (Pharaoh), who should do a little work on his enunciation, gave an inspired interpretation of "The King" that nearly stopped the show. His impression was very, very good and I consider myself somewhat an expert on this subject having been raised in Quebec where at least 43 per cent of the male population do Elvis impersonations religiously.

Elizabeth Beeler, who is becoming a familiar face to Halifax theatre goers, was clearly the outstanding performer of a production of outstanding performers. Her acting gets better with every assignment and, although her role as a narrator in **Joseph** does not give her very much opportunity to emote, she unleashed a really dynamite singing voice that impressed me and everyone I've had the chance to speak with.

I could go on and describe many of the numbers but words just would not capture the spectacle and energy that the cast created. I trust many of the technical problems of opening night will have vanished. **Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat** runs until November 26 at the McInnes Room of the S.U.B. I heartily recommend it.

WHO are the Alright Kids?

by **Ken Burke**

If, sometime in this nuclear age, somebody gets the bright idea to bury a rock'n'roll time capsule complete with rock films, there should be one foregone conclusion for inclusion. **The Kids Are Alright**, starring and personifying **the WHO**.

The Kids are Alright is coming to Dal this December second at 8 p.m. in the McInnes Room of the S.U.B., courtesy of this humble newspaper. The fact of our sponsorship of the film might seem to preclude any hopes you may have of fair and objective criticism in this review, but fear not, and read on. You see, the film's good enough to cancel any thought of objective criticism anyway. I've seen it four times. Next Thursday will be my fifth time 'round. And it won't be the last.

Director Jeff Stein created the movie from odds and sods of T.V.

interviews, promo films, and lots and lots of live concert footage over the career of the Who - much of it filmed especially for the movie. It all succeeds because it's so close to the subject. Jeff Stein was a Who-maniac for years before he concocted the idea of testimonial on celluloid, and it shows. When the film was begun in 1975, Stein pored over the archival resources of fans on several continents and recorded shot after shot of the Who in rehearsal and live before the finished movie was released in late '79. The result is the Who.

The Who have always been known for one thing - sheer, barely restrained power. Not for nothing is the term "power chords" traced back to Pete Townshend and the early Who - they originated and perfected the term. For years, kids have been busting lights, furniture, and what-have-you imitating Townshend windmilling his way through **My Generation** or **Won't Get Fooled Again**. What is incredible about the film is it's got that same energy everywhere. It's a film literally without a dull moment.

This is a film that moves with a rock'n'roll swagger. Stein keeps the clips moving fast and edited tightly - from early live footage of **I Can't Explain** to a ridiculous early '70's talk-show interview to an interview of Keith Moon (by Ringo Starr!) to a silly promo film of **Happy Jack** - it all comes together naturally. Instead of saying, "This is bits and pieces of the Who's career," Stein has crafted a homage which says in every minute, "This is, was, and always will be the Who."

As I said before, Stein chose his live stuff carefully. The Who's legend as the "World's best live band" may be publicity-contrived, but there's nothing slack about the performances here. It's especially remarkable to watch Keith Moon back with the early - and mid-sixties - Who. His angelic, almost-bored face seems unconnected to

the arms turning drumsticks and hands into a blur, beating the hell out of various drum kits - before destroying them completely.



The film mainly focusses on the Moon and Townshend - the Who's two most "important" members. Townshend's conscious role of Rock's philosophical favorite Uncle comes across well during the interview sections and his persona of showman supreme is stamped in every live shot or promo film used here. You can be assured, you'll never see more guitars smashed in two hours of your life than you will in this film.

Also of note in the film is the excellent sound quality of the concert stuff. Even early black-and-white T.V. footage comes out with the quality of a good bootleg or "raw" version. And although Keith Moon OD'd while the film was almost finished (his last concert appearance is in the movie - a cataclysmic "Won't Get Fooled Again"), Stein thankfully didn't include any smarmy 'tribute'. Moon's best eulogy is the film, which helps chronicle his excesses through the ages.

In short, if you like Rock'n'roll music, you'll love the **Kids Are Alright**. If you like the Who, the movie could turn into something of an obsession. Try it. Besides, we could use your two bucks.



Sandra Grant, Danny Melanson, and Sandra Alyward of the muppet medical team yuk it up over the condition of patient Heather Dickie at this year's annual For the Health Of It, a variety night. The skit above is part of Pharmacy's contribution to the evening's hilarity. The faculties of Physiotherapy, Nursing, Pharmacy and S.A.H.P.E.R. played to a packed enthusiastic audience, placing 1st to 4th respectively.

Grant/Dal Photo