

Arkin is great, but the movie...

by Rick Blair

One major obstacle a director meets when making a film which deals with physical and mental disabilities is a lack of communication with an audience 99% normal (relatively speaking). A truly great movie should be able to get its point across by reaching us on our terms and in our own language.

You might say that sounds ridiculous when the plot involves a deaf mute; however, I would counter by pointing to **The Miracle Worker**. This film successfully placed its problem of teaching an unteachable deaf-mute before us and successfully solved this problem to the satisfaction of the viewer. **The Heart is a Lonely Hunter** unfortunately does not.

The story of this latter movie deals with a deaf-mute played by Alan Arkin who gains more friends than he can ever need.

Unfortunately all these "friends" draw upon him for stability, understanding and hope while giving him nothing to grasp in return.

For instance, he helps a drunken bum to regain a purpose in life; but when this fellow gets a job he doesn't even have time for a game of chess which is pretty well the only recreation Alan Arkin receives in his silent world.

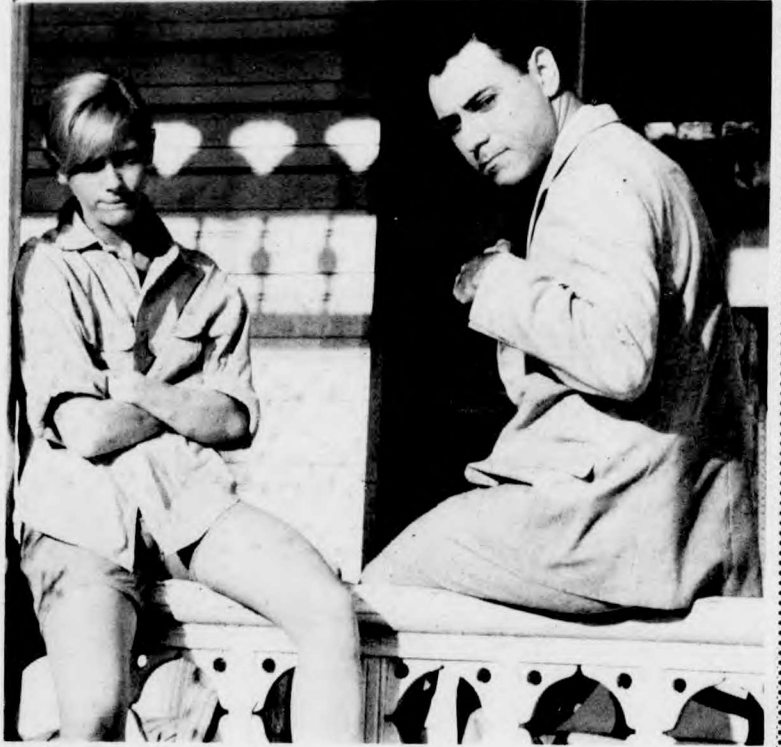
I don't usually tell the endings of movies but I think it may help if you know what's going to happen before it does. You see I am afraid that the ending was a big let-down and certainly didn't follow naturally from what preceded it. Anyway, Arkin shoots himself.

I can sum up the acting in one word — great. Arkin is extremely credible as the "Lonely Hunter"; he fails to bring off the "Christ-like" caricature which the screenplay seemed to

be adopting but I think this failure was to his credit.

Sandra Locke, as the young girl becoming a woman, who (unwittingly wrapped up in her own problems) eventually causes his suicide is excellent — her delivery and mannerisms are very real. It's hard to describe Chuck McCann's performance as Arkin's deaf-mute and mentally retarded true friend. I think it was a bit stereotyped but then I haven't really met a disturbed person (except perhaps Patrick Scott) so I couldn't say.

I am afraid the acting doesn't cover up the major flaw in this film. Instead it tends to frustrate the viewer who feels that all that talent could have been put to better use. I hope we again see Alan Arkin play a role as sensitively and with such understanding as he does in **The Heart is a Lonely Hunter**.



Central Library's Eh?-good despite the direction

by Frank Liebeck

Back some time ago, Dustin Hoffman came to wide attention when he starred in the Off-Broadway production of Henry Livings' *Eh?*. Needless to say, he received such praise that they let him seduce Anne Bancroft a year later, and the rest is history.

Eh? is now a film with David Warner (the man who played Morgan), only the cinematic version is entitled *Work Is A Four*

Letter Word. Those who don't yet admit the strange similarity between *Morgan* and *The Graduate* should note this uncanny coincidence in casting.

The chap playing the lead in the Belmont Theatre Production of *Eh?* could easily be mistaken for the Missing Link if it were not for his shaven face. He's no Hoffman or Warner, but nevertheless plays a bungling cretin with enough plausibility to bring off a good performance. His

name is David Hemblin, who periodically neglects the hilarious aspects of his character in favour of a more sober interpretation.

If the director, Brian Meeson would only let him loose more often, the evening would have slipped by more quickly and the absurdity of the play itself would have been more evident.

Valentine is hired to attend a boiler at night. He comes to work at five to twelve, switches the boiler on, and must turn it

off eight and one half hours later. Between those two tasks, he must oil certain parts every four hours; and other areas after many days. That's it. But of course our hero bungles it constantly. He falls asleep, and allows too much black smoke to escape upstairs. Then Reverend Mort has to come down to reprimand him. Eventually Valentine sets up house-keeping with his bride in the boiler room. He sleeps in the upper bunk, and she sleeps in the lower one, and rarely do the twain meet.

Kenneth Dight as the vicar, priest, or whatever, is just superb. He comes on doing a Twenties' dance to the Beatles "When I'm Sixty-Four", and every time he's on stage he adds so much whimsical nuttiness so that he's the only one to capture without ever failing the spirit of the play.

The rest of the cast, though they all range from good to excellent at one time or another, perhaps try too hard in bringing this play off, and as a result, their mannerisms appear stylized now and then. The heavy handed directing added obviously to a contrived atmosphere.

Lyn Wright provides us with sex, which I don't think was all

that easy for her. Sheila Haney gives us no sex, which was probably the easiest thing in the world for her. But that's all part of the zaniness of the whole thing.

David gives us one flash of insight into the play. It is by no means a complete grasp of meaning, because when you come upon so elusive and abstract a piece, you just can't pin it down. He speaks of his loss of identity in such a world. Machines dominate and man has lost his sense of meaning in life. He has nothing valid to do.

Hemblen's finest moment comes when he pretends to be steering a ship into the heart of darkness, and there is no doubt a parallel somewhere in there.

The lighting and set design is first rate. At the end, the boiler blows up, and deep red lights flood the stage. Somehow a contradiction prevails here. Electronically the play ends on such a high note. The effects are almost dazzling, yet if indeed one of the points of the play is man overcoming the machine, or electronics, then the director seems to be using an "evil" that the playwright is trying to overcome. It's a thought anyway.



David Hemblin and Lyn Wright in "EH?" at the Central Library theatre.

Marat Sade production an outrage

by Jane Dalton

Trio Productions version of the *Marat/Sade*, formally called "The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade", could be better described as "The Persecution and Assassination of a Toronto Audience." The play, written by Peter Weiss and being performed at the Number Eleven Theatre, is the most disastrous evening of theatre I've ever experienced. The play left my mind frustrated, angry and boggled.

The whole production was an


outrageous insult to the Toronto theatre audience. The Trio production was in rehearsal for only two months and was put on by an inexperienced director. It took Peter Brook and the company of Royal Shakespeare Theatre in London six months to prepare their production of *Marat/Sade* and they are one of the best companies in the world. The result of Trio's production was a superficial performance by nearly every member of the cast. Their roles were never made vital or realistic.

The original work consists of a mixing of music, movement and drama. In the Toronto production

the music is provided by a totally out-of-place rock group. The actors, playing members of an insane asylum, did not have the slightest idea of how to play at being insane, their movement was undisciplined and it was obvious that their roles were unstudied.

Drama was non-existent. Surely, this play has meaning, but none came through in this production. While Toronto theatre audiences are notorious in their preference for obscure and complicated drama, they also like drama which gives them something to think about. This production did not offer even that.

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