

ENTERTAIN MEAT



THE TRIFFIDS "Calenture" (Island Records)

O.K. Let's get the terminology over with. *Triffids* are large totalbastardmonster plants from a far distant galaxy that thrive on ramming poisonous stigmas through unfortunate victims' foreheads. It's worse because most of the human race are blind and helpless due to the fact that when the seeds crash through the stratosphere there is deady by seemingly benign firework display (book by John Wydham).

Calenture, the title of the album produced by the antipodean sixsome, refers to the tropical delirium in which homesick sailors mistake the seas for rolling green fields and plunge to their deaths. There you go, now you can go and impress all of your friends.

With a name like the *Triffids* then, and understanding where they got their name from, the listener might imagine some eccentric punkoid band with a fetish for cabbages. But no, this is clearly not the case. David McComb is the lead Aussie and develops the *Calenture* metaphor to include most of the beautiful songs on the excellent album. He describes his notion as "a time when you get so isolated from things that you suddenly discover you're misreading the situation; that what you thought was your saviour was in fact your downfall."

It's always a bit disconcerting when you discover that your Mum appears to be playing one of your favourite albums more than you are, but then that's the beautiful simplicity of the accessibility of something like *Calenture* to anybody that loves music. One gets the general idea right from the opening track *Bury Me Deep in Love* - a lushly produced opener that sounds eerily like the Walker Brothers when they were at their best. In fact, and I know this sounds like a rather stupid criticism, the album almost sounds too professional and too confident and I really don't know why this should bother me. Mum thinks it's probably because it is so immediately enthralling, that there is none of that 'brilliant after four or five listens' type of thing. This immediately works its way into your heart with a paintbox of musical colours. I'm sure that soon however the bubble will burst when they become the next coffee-table favourites of the young middle-class that are set to discard the ultra-boring U2 anyway now. Although no lyric sheets are provided it's become quite clear that McComb's subject matter does not rigidly adhere to the "loved-one-starts-bonking-lover-leaving-other-party-to-feel-a-bit-fed up" formula around which (arguably) most popular music tends to cluster like flies around the Old Arts Building. *Jerdacuttup Man* actually deals with a well preserved specimen of one of our prehistoric ancestors found recently in an English bog. The way McComb is able to twist this narrative around to a feeling of latter-day despair and hopelessness is really quite inventive.

There is no doubt that this is one of my favourite albums of the year, but I still can't feel quite at ease when one's whole family (including Gran for pete's sake!) is humming and whistling *Bury Me Deep in Love* simultaneously at various points around the house. Time to put on my slippers and start smoking a pipe I suppose.

NORBERT SCROGGS



Hey kids! I managed to wangle back as editor of this pally section next year! The 'meat lives on! Many thanks to all contributors that struffed their stuff over the past year. See you soon. Lots of love from your very own Mr. Inappropriate - Yer pal, NEDDY

THE ZOO STORY

Edward Albee
Directed by Ron Spurles

Reviewed by KWAME DAWES



Edward Albee's first play "The Zoo Story" makes sense of his success as a playwright in later years. His anxieties at the publication of his first collection of plays should be relieved by now since his career has been nothing short of being successful and impressive. "Careers are funny things," he writes in 1960, "They begin mysteriously and, just as mysteriously, they can end," yet it would seem to many that the early work of Albee demonstrates a dramatic sense and economy of form that lends itself to the kind of career that he hoped he would have and that he did have; "a long and satisfying life in the theatre."

Theatre St. Thomas' staging of "The Zoo Story" is a fitting demonstration of the challenging and impressive skills of Edward Albee. The production, directed by Ron Spurles, is a sparse and controlled bit of theatre which tries to draw as much out of the text as possible. For just over fifty-five minutes, we watch two men, Peter, a middle-class New Yorker who is a publisher and has a wife, two daughters, a cat and two cars, and Jerry, a young lower-class New Yorker who has a very tragic sense of himself, living in what is essentially a slum and having lost his parents, who were not really much good as parents, ranging, fighting and eventually committing a joint crime in what is essentially a dialogue about the class conflicts and prejudices in America of the sixties. Peter (Michael Cronin) epitomizes the American Dream with all its attendant features of good-sense, condescension, guilt, ignorance about the experience of others who don't belong in that economic bracket, and a pathetic naivete about the reality of North American society. The performance by Michael Cronin is controlled and quite believable to the extent that we can readily emphasize with the sense of horror and bewilderment that he feels when confronted with the aggression of Jerry, played with a poetic self-consciousness by Bill McKibbin. Jerry is an intelligent "angry young man", a rebel without a well articulated cause who is basically suicidal and lonely, but who takes pleasure in attacking the staid world of the middle-class Peter. Albee's play, written in 1958, is a perfect metaphor for the rebellion of the sixties which saw the "good old values" of American life challenged by the intellectual freedom and violence of the rock and roll youthful vigour of the sixties. Yet, in Albee's play, there is an even more insightful prophetic quality. The young rebel is destroyed in the end by his own manipulation of the executive, Peter. Jerry impales himself on a knife that he gives to Peter to defend himself against his (Jerry's) threats and attacks. Jerry dies thanking Peter for what he has done and Peter runs out screaming "Oh God!". We wonder if Peter has learnt anything and if Peter needs to learn anything by this experience.

It is to the credit of the cast and crew of this production that this reviewer is spending more space discussing the play as a statement and not harping on petty details about production. The actors were true conveyors of Albee's script making use of idiosyncratic gestures and speech patterns that brought the conflict between the two men to the fore. Perhaps Bill McKibbin played the "poetic hippie" with too much self-consciousness which sometimes reduced the charged atmosphere of intimidation between the two characters, but this is a small thing especially since McKibbin's rendition of the "dog" monologue seemed to demand the kind of interaction that was lacking in the earlier sections of the piece. That monologue is a lengthy and difficult one, but it was well handled by McKibbin.

One wonders if the slides used to create a sense of New York at the opening of the production were necessary and whether they could not have been used with greater effect throughout the piece. The sparseness of the set: a park bench yellow against a totally black background was useful in forcing our attention to remain focused on the two actors on the stage. This kind of economy of style is Albee, but Ron Spurles did well in translating that into active and entertaining theatre.

It would seem to me that St. Thomas University has discovered something essential about amateur productions which the UNB theatre world should make note of. Since I have been here, UNB has constantly sought to stage old classics which are generally very difficult to handle when the casts are made up mainly of first timers on stage. On the other hand, Theatre St. Thomas have done productions like "Godspell", an eclectic collection of short dramatic pieces staged with the aim of involving all the students in dramatic performance, and now a relatively modern piece, "The Zoo Story." Apart from Sharon Pollock's "Blood Relations" (which was treated as a period play and therefore proved to be somewhat distant from the experience of the cast) UNB has not entered into the twentieth century. Not belittling the importance of doing classical pieces, I am nevertheless convinced

that there is enough talent at UNB to produce the kind of modern plays that will bring out the best in the skills of the ambitious actors here at UNB. This way, the interest in theatre would flourish some more and perhaps we will see the rebirth of the UNB Theatre Company. "Volpone" and "A Comedy of Errors" are certainly excellent plays, but they just don't seem to be the kinds of plays that will encourage promising actors to get involved with theatre some more. The fossilization of the classics is something we must be concerned about here at UNB. Good work, St. Thomas Theatre, I enjoyed that production tremendously.