

## the hovel: off and running

Hovel: (defn.) any small miserable dwelling.

Such a place has been set up on 102nd Avenue and 109th Street next door to the A&W. The only difference is that the place is large enough to hold 200 people, its very pleasant, and nobody really lives there—except from 10:00 p.m. till 4:00 a.m. every night except Tuesday.

The idea of setting up a coffee house was first conceived of by Andy Laskiwski, who was working on a provincial grant

that allowed him to do "anything he wanted to".

Andy's goal was to set up a centrally located place where songwriters and musicians could be exposed, and to create a setting where they could maintain a person to person relationship with their audience. Part of the effect, Laskiwski believes, would be to foster self-creativity in the audience; the young people in the downtown area would have a means of stimulation, providing an alternative to drugs and alcohol. Four members of the

Hovel are being paid through an L.I.P. grant. They include Ian Ross, who designed the sound system, Sorelle Saidman, former director of the Middle Earth Teen Centre, David Brown, and Keith Ross, and part of their salary is currently going into the club to keep it going. The grant, however, expires in May, but Andy says that he has other plans for meeting the \$700 monthly rent and continuing with full time staff. He refused to comment on what these plans were—but they do *not* involve the renewal of the grant.

Their emphasis in booking their talent is on the person who sings his own material. However, anyone interested in being booked on weekends can perform at the Wednesday night Open Stage; the staff then gets together and decides which of the Wednesday night performers to book. Last Wednesday they experienced such talented artists as John Entle, Richard White, and LaVera Carter, a black-gospel-soul singer (who will be appearing at RATT tonight). So far, they have had a tremendous response, with the place being packed every night. Part of the reason for this is probably the very informal atmosphere combined with the fact that there are no time restrictions—the entertainment usually goes on past 3:00 in the morning, even on weekdays. Andy says that he does not anticipate any tapering off in the response.

Another unusual thing that the Hovel is doing is to work with the other coffee houses and folk clubs in the city (eg. Room at the Top, The Albany, and the Edmonton Folk Club) rather than to compete with them.

Laskiwski believes that if there are more successful clubs

in the city, there will be more entertainers visiting and as a result, a greater number of people will get involved in the coffee house scene. Thus, the introduction of more coffee houses will increase rather than decrease business in the already existing coffee houses.

Some of the talent to appear during the coming weeks are LaVera Carter and the Echoes of Shilo, Jan Randell, John Entle, Murray Lee, King Anderson, and Brent Titcomb. Sunday nights features jazz, with Mugwump, a group consisting of Tommy Doran, George McFedrige, Blayne Dunaway, John Toulson, and others. Thursday nights, they bring in Rock groups, with admission raised to \$1.25. Sweet Grass will be playing this Thursday.

They have open stages, with a \$1.25 admission charge. All their entertainment begins at 10:00 p.m. and continues till God knows when. They close Tuesdays to enable Edmonton "folkies" to get down to the Edmonton Folk Club's open stages and special workshops at RATT.

Larry Saidman

## two sides of titcomb

At first glance Brent Titcomb might be regarded as just another singer/songwriter who, in his particular case, became popular through Anne Murray's versions of his songs. His concert last Friday with the Edmonton Symphony confirmed this opinion only to a certain degree. Brent's excellent ability to communicate and his serious approach towards Eastern music make him something special and interesting.

The comb's performance was mainly based on his familiar songs, "People's Park", "Sycamore Slick" and the most famous "Sing High, Sing Low". These middle-of-the-road songs, which Brent writes so well, are simple, catchy and commercial with some nice lyrics thrown in for good measure. Brent played them well and the audience had every reason to be satisfied.

Musically most interesting, because less commercial and more serious was the singer's journey into Eastern music with "Tibetan Bells" and "Find Your Center". Joined by sitar, tabla and tamboura, Titcomb managed to create a beautiful atmosphere which left the listener silent for seconds after each song. "Find Your Center", which included some good orchestration from the ESO, was the musical highlight of Brent's performance.

Outstanding describes best the way the singer communicated with the audience and developed an atmosphere in the large Jubilee auditorium. The introductions to his songs were humorous and informative, two words which sum up Brent's personality on stage and which will help him to last longer than many other singer/songwriters.

Bob Carpenter, lately a familiar face in Edmonton, appeared along with Brent. Bob was as good as usual, but somehow something was lacking. It might have been that the "coffeehouse" Jubilee was too large and did not establish the intimate atmosphere Bob needs. It might have been that the orchestra arrangements were too polished and reduced the effect of Bob's deep voice. Personally, I prefer listening to Bob and his guitar at RATT or some similar place. Hopefully he'll be back there soon.

A last word about the orchestra, as usual, conducted by Tommy Banks. It provided some nice back-up orchestrations without major parts of its own and without being a necessity for the songs. This, however, should change in the next concert of the "Sounds of the Seventies" series; Chuck Mangione will certainly give the ESO more opportunity to display its musicianship.

Harold Kuchertz..lr

# the arts

## the rowdyman:

### a newfie vision

Went out to the Londonderry Cinema the other night to take a look at *The Rowdyman* with the intent of fleshing out my Canadian content quote checklist. I missed this movie the first time it came through town. Canadian movies are like that. They're easy to miss. Frequently there's little that is compelling about these movies. They lack whatever is necessary to lure people into the cinemas to see them. One remembers that *The Rowdyman* did receive a good deal of favourable publicity when it first appeared but the reviewers were mostly lukewarm, seemingly reluctant to shower the movie or its actors with praise yet at the same time eager to focus their attentions and the public's on a Canadian product.

The reasons for this hesitancy soon become clear when one sees the film. It is indubitably a "Canadian" film but its drama seems diminutive and shallow when it is held in focus by calendar picture scenery. *The Rowdyman* is the story of a Newfoundland redneck who refuses to settle down, instead the redneck consistently returns to his self-manufactured good times that have lighted his passage to benevolent oblivion. This approaching oblivion, rowdy Will sees all around him. First his hero Stan, Will's aged prototype, dies clutching nothing but a few memories of his own legendary good times and a paltry collection of love letters, remnants of what might have been. Will's best friend Andrew, marries, leaving Will alone in his capricious meanderings, susceptible to his own mischievous devices. Shortly after, Andrew is killed in a paper mill accident for which Will blames himself. Will creates a hell-hole of nameless despair for himself but eventually not even this self-enforced melancholia is sufficient to keep him down and coerce him into abandoning his carefree daze. Soon he is, as irrepressibly as ever, rousing the local constabulary in his inimicable and jocular manner. Will is a constant probe puncturing compositly wherever he finds it. Will won't change. Will can't change.

It's hard to avoid the echoes from *Five Easy Pieces*. The story is similar in many ways, the clearest of which is the

treatment of the central character. *The Rowdyman*, scripted by Gordon Pinsent is shallower and less vital in comparison. Overriding this movie is a chauvinistic veil. It is a tapestry which records the story of the local boy who made good and then returned to his birthplace to flaunt his gratitude by means of affectionate artistic renderings. Pinsent does so in an admirable fashion and it's a pity that he didn't have a stronger tale to lavish his attention on.

Pinsent is actually quite marvellous in the lead role in a strangely quiet kind of a way. His characterization has an unfinished quality about it, as if some elusive element was missing for some enigmatic,

inexplicable reason. He does not touch the very soul of the redneck. This in no way detracts from Pinsent's performance. Will is always an engaging rowdyman. Will Geer as Stan gives a sensitive but dangerously bordering on tear-jerking, performance. It is almost maudlin; but he manages to dance on the thin edge of senility and glistening memory. Scenes in which confused younger men trade dreams with older and fading men are becoming set pieces in movies which centres centre on anti-heroes of this type. Perhaps that is why Geer's scenes were laden with an inescapable aura of well-polished cliché. There were other actors in the movie who did well enough but none so inconspicuously as the Newfoundland populace. There's simply no way in which this movie could have been filmed in Maine.

Therein lies the movie's emotional touchstone. It is finally and irrevocably a Canadian film. Peter Carter knows this and his direction relentlessly hammers it home with long lingering shots of Newfoundland's flora, fauna and foam. This attitude has a debilitating effect on the movie. It robs the story of its people by splitting our consciousness into halves, inducing chauvinistic judgments which produces a confusion of responses. The movie is interesting enough; the actors are refreshing, but the story is shallow. The temptation to praise *The Rowdyman* as an example of grown-up Canadian film is great and the critical reluctance to examine the movie closely for flaws is understandable. For all that, *The Rowdyman* remains a minor but sufficiently adroit film of Canadian origin.

Walter Plinge

## ravi (olé)!



The sitar is the most popular stringed instrument of India. It has a track of 20 metal frets, with six or seven main playing strings and thirteen sympathetic resonating strings placed below. On Feb. 14 at 8 p.m., Ravi Shankar, renowned sitarist, will be appearing at the Jubilee Auditorium. Tickets: \$5.75 - \$4.00 - \$3.00 at SUB, Bonnie Doon

## seagull

Currently in rehearsal and opening February 8th at the Studio Theatre, is Chekov's *The Seagull*. Settings and costumes are designed by Gwen Keatley, and the cast is directed by Mark Schoenberg.

*The Seagull* is about love - despair - small victories and larger losses. Above all, it is about life lived in a dying society, by people who have lost their way. Chekov's characters pass over and through each others' lives, without ever quite touching at the right times.

*The Seagull* will play nightly, from February 8th to 17th, with matinee performances on Saturday, February 10th, and Saturday, February 17th. Evening performances will commence at 8:30; matinee performances at 2:30. The box office will open Thursday, February 1st.