

# When Lions and larks walk together

by Candy Fertile

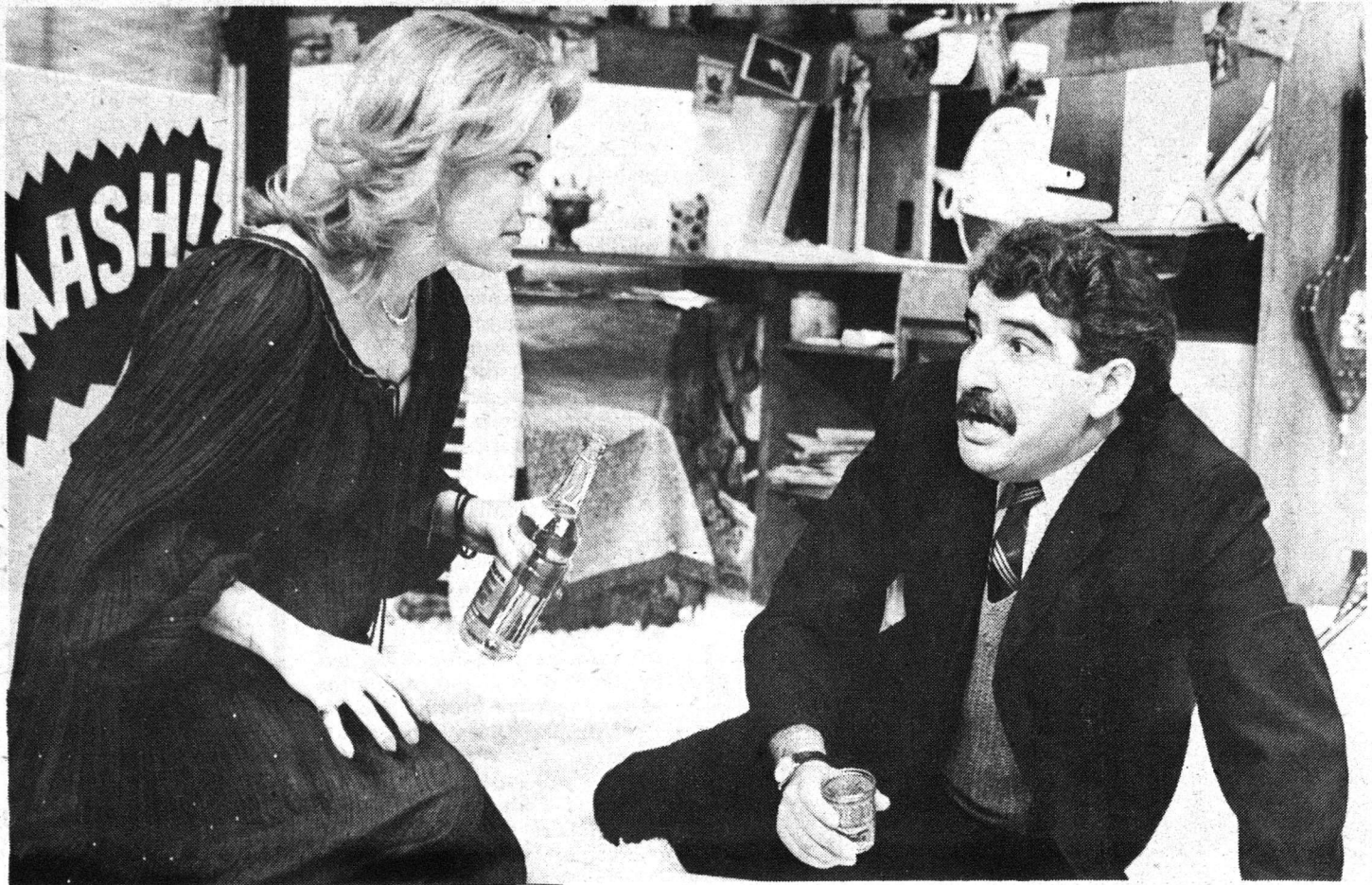
Picture a pill-popping, boozing, semi-hysterical, Canadian ad-writer and a paranoid, boozing, exiled Russian poet, and you have the germ of Ron Chudley's new play *The Lion and the Lark*, now at Theatre 3. Chudley throws these two people together for about 24 hours and some really fine things come out of the confrontation.

Leo (Ara Hovan), the poet, leaves Russia and comes to Vancouver. He is aided by David MacKenzie (Hamish Boyd), a young journalist he met in Russia. David, in unreporterly fashion, helps shield Leo from the press and takes him to spend the night at his sister's place. Bea (Wanda Cannon) is the sister and the mad ad-writer. She is a whirlwind of activity and, as David points out, the ideal person to teach Leo idiomatic English. Leo's English is quite correct but he wants to learn the idioms. From Bea he learns more than idiomatic English.

We soon discover that Leo and Bea have one thing in common: alcohol. Either of them will dive for the bottle with the least provocation. Leo decides to try and learn how to drink Scotch, while Bea attempts to down gallons of vodka in honour of her new acquaintance. She doesn't hold up too well and a still sober Leo points out that in order to drink like a Russian "you have to start very young and have lots of forget."

The predictable things that happen in the play are handled with sensitivity and humour. Leo's complete fascination with a hot shaving cream dispenser and disposable razors is wonderfully played by Ara Hovan. The inevitable discussion about writing between poet and ad-writer brings out hidden aspects of each character. Both have things they regret and want to forget.

One thing that Bea cannot forget is the ad campaign she is working on for a product called Health Nuts. She hates them (how can anyone eat this crap?) and has a hard time finding anything good to say about them. Leo likes them and



Leo (Ara Hovan) and Bea (Wanda Cannon) end up drunk after an impromptu language lesson in Theatre 3's *The Lion and the Lark*.

indirectly helps Bea with the ad. He is very kind in not criticizing Bea's work. He even confesses that he did ad-work in Russia.

Some things in the play do not work. Chudley tries to pack far too many things into the second half. There is a sub-plot concerning Sandra, Bea's daughter, which combined with the deadline, brings Bea to a crisis. The resolution wrought by Leo is a little too pat for me to be comfortable with.

Chudley should have stayed with the dramatic situation set up by the interplay of the two characters. The daughter plot is unnecessary and another plot concerning Bea's relationship with her brother

is left up in the air.

Some of the telephone conversations need to be cut. When Bea is talking to Bernie, her boss, she needs to be a little less aggressive and tough.

Both Bea and David are played too broadly. When Bea first attacks the stage she has on an extraordinary outfit supposed to signal her individual wackiness but it is simply too much. The running patter that Bea keeps up with herself, Leo, telephone callers and the air is somewhat forced. It's a case of Wanda Cannon playing Bea playing Bea.

David is a small role. We see him only at the beginning and the end of the play. Each time he bursts on to the stage

in a distracting manner. Both David and Bea are very lively types but they needn't be played so excessively.

Ara Hovan as Leo is delightful. He also gets the best lines. Chudley's comic sense appears to be acute, especially in the character of Leo. The poet also manages to show joy and sorrow equally well.

This run at Theatre 3 is the world premiere of the play. With a bit of rewriting and cutting in the second part this play should be successful. The basic idea is good and there is a nice sensibility regarding the characters. There are a lot of good laughs and some good reflective moments. The play runs until November 23.

# Waits and Dire Straits do it again

by Michael Dennis Skeet

A necessarily-brief look today at some of the many interesting releases that have piled on my desk over the past few weeks.



Heart Attack and Vine  
Tom Waits  
(Asylum XGE 295)

Tom Waits is what you might call an acquired taste. In a voice that suggests a down-and-out lounge singer who gargles with Liquid Plumber, Waits sings - or rather, rasps - songs about life, love, loneliness and death on the seamy side. Tom's at it again, with *Heartattack and Vine* (Asylum XGE 295), an album that

continues the Waits tradition of taking a certain perverse pride in the sleaziness it portrays.

Waits is one of this generation's most talented pop songwriters, adroitly spinning tales that treat what would normally be shocking with offhanded dispatch. His songs have been more or less ignored by others, I suspect, chiefly because his singing style is so stupefyingly unique that his material just doesn't sound right coming from anybody else.

There are a number of songs on *Heartattack and Vine* that match anything Waits has done so far. *On the Nickel* and *Ruby's Arms* are heart-breakers, Waits seemingly struggling to keep his head above water. There is more punch to some of the numbers than is common for Waits; this, pushing that gravelly voice to the limit, lends a raw quality to the album that is at times disturbing.

*Heartattack and Vine* is not a gem in the sense that *Small Change* was, but it's recommended for Waits' fans. Those who've never heard him before are encouraged to pick up a copy of *Small Change* and listen closely.

Making Movies  
Dire Straits  
(Mercury SRMI - 3857)

As Tom Waits is out of the ordinary, so Dire Straits may not necessarily appeal to the typical post-adolescent rocker.

Dire Straits have a good thing going for themselves in their catchy, swing-influenced rhythm, and that distinctive vocal sound. Their work is very identifiable, and while this could cause problems in the future, the here and now suggests, *Making Movies* is a winner.

A gentle beat swings and sways throughout the record, and the total effect is very engaging. Knopfler brings it off with a guitar performance that is understated yet constant. The first and last tunes, *Tunnel of Love* and *Les Boys*, are my favorites, with special mention going to *Romeo and Juliet*, a strange downtown updating of the old Italian romance.



Making Movies (Mercury SRMI-3857), the band's third album, is not *Sultans of Swing*. Mark Knopfler has chosen to

display his talent with a slower-paced album, and in this case it works well.

## New and Noted

The Buzzcocks were in the initial wave of new English rock bands of the mid-70's. They have never achieved either the fame or the notoriety of their contemporaries, the Sex Pistols, the Clash and the Jam. Their third album, *A Different Kind of Tension* (Liberty-United Sp009) shows a band still in the formative stages. I'm willing to bet they're dynamite live, but on record they're still somewhat simplistic, lacking the musical verve that brought the Jam up, out of the pack. Guitarists Peter Shelley and Steve Diggle are still writing powerful, direct political songs, and when the arrangements are up to scratch, as in *I Believe*, the future looks good. As political music, I find *A Different Kind of Tension* much more listenable than the Gang of Four's *Entertainment*.

I got really excited with the Teddy Boys' single *He Only Goes Out With Boys*. Here was a clever idea given a snappy realization and high-energy music - pure power pop. Unfortunately, this Canadian group's debut album, *On Air*, (WEA 92006) doesn't quite make it. The concept is great - life as a day of TV programming on Channel 187 - but the songs, with a few exceptions, don't match that level of creativity. Hopefully all these guys need is the experience gained with the first album. I'm now looking forward to their second.