

Film on the "champion of the overdog"

Laughs top romance in Why Rock the Boat

By JULIAN BELTRAME

In the past Canadian films have had to try and compete with both American films and the sometimes ridiculous assertion that films made

in this country were second-rate efforts.

One always suspected that at the heart of criticism about quality was really a criticism of content, and that

what English-Canadian audiences were complaining about was small-budget art pictures. A good example was Don Shebib's *Between Friends*, which opened to generally good

reviews and died in Toronto a week later.

This may all end with *Why Rock the Boat*, a very funny National Film Board picture about a young man's attempt to break into the newspaper business as a cub reporter for the *Montreal Daily Witness*, lovingly referred to by its own journalists as the "worst paper in the Dominion of Canada".

GULLIBLE

Harry Barnes (Stuart Gillard) is the naive, gullible, conformist reporter who believes in a "kind-hearted capitalism". He arrives at the *Witness*'s building just as the paper's heartless editor Philip Butcher fires his cub reporter for misspelling the name of an advertiser. With glee, Butcher (Henry Beckman) tells Harry that a spot has just opened up.

Butcher is the type of editor who can tell you more about the advertisers in the paper than the news it reports, which gives you an indication why the *Witness* is described as the "courageous defender of the overdog."

Our friend is soon befriended by Ronny Waldron (Ken James), a hard-nosed photographer who drinks, eats, breathes, but mostly sleeps with women who drink, eat, breathe, but mostly sleep with men. There is a teacher-pupil relationship, because Harry is a self-confessed 21 year-old virgin.

Much to Ronny's dismay, poor Harry falls heads over heels for the tight-kneed Julia Martin, a reporter for one of the *Witness*' competitors,

whom even the smooth, experienced Ronny couldn't get into the sack.

TROUBLE

Trouble results when Ronny convinces our friend to take up reading Lenin and Marx to please the socialist Julia, and when Harry starts believing what he's reading. Not even the wise Ronny who tells him, "The trouble with you is not that you're a capitalist—but that you're a poor capitalist", is enough to fully satisfy him, whose socialist leanings are tied up with his infatuation with Julia.

The fine script by William Weintraub, adapted from his novel of 1961, may no longer be valid of *Montreal* newspapers today as it was of 1947 (the time the film is set in), but the film in no way suffers because of this.

Why Rock the Boat succeeds because it never loses sight of what it set out to achieve. It never sacrifices laughs for commentaries on socialism or criticism of the newspaper's pro-government (Duplessis) stance. Only a passing mention is made of the paper covering up a government official's having been arrested in a brothel.

Directed John Howe of the Film Board, who also composed the music and wrote the words for the film's five songs, doesn't allow the film to wander very far from the "romantic comedy" title it gives itself at the beginning. More often than not, the film is more funny than romantic.

UNFORTUNATE

But there are faults in the film, and regrettably, faults that might have been avoided.

Tiiu Leek is very close to being incompetent as Julia. I for one kept wondering what Harry ever saw in the dull, slogan-carrying bitch. She is not even as attractive as the city editor's wife, who seduces our friend over a bowl of popcorn—a scene very reminiscent of the hotel dining room scene in *Tom Jones*, with the difference that this one goes pop.

Julia's reason for fending off Harry's romantic advances is that she's involved with another, but we never get to see him, nor are we given any indication that he even exists.

The film's ending is somewhat disappointing, reminding us of the all too easy successes that Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney were able to pull off in the thirties.

But by then it's too late. Not even a hokey ending can spoil the funny goings on in the film, and I for one, plan to be in the line for the film's October 11 premiere, for a second look.



Stuart Gillard as cub reporter Harry Barnes and Henry Beckman as managing editor Phillip

L. Butcher clash in a scene from the NFB production of *Why Rock the Boat?*

Dance group's ease generates euphoria

By AGNES KRUCHIO

There is something incredibly joyous about having physically developed oneself to the point that one's body will do what one wants it to.

And once this level of competence is reached the resultant performance takes on a play-like ease and lightness that can lift even an unappreciative audience off the ground.

That about sums up the impression generated by Le Groupe de la Place Royal of Montreal, at Burton Auditorium last Wednesday night, as they opened the Performing Arts Series.

The company opened with a series of 14 short dances, choreographed by all of its members at various times, which were all terse, funny and quite imaginative. Mention should be made of such delightfully twisted humorous pieces as *Monkeys*, in which two of the women displayed their unending talent for making comic faces; *Camay*, which poked fun at the soap's advertising to the rhythm of rapid-fire hawking of the artistic director, and finally, *The Virgin Gargoyle*, which took the latter term quite literally as the dancers composed their own music in a garbling chorus.

I must say: *I faut bien le dire*, a series of lyrical interactions between members of three couples was choreographed by Peter Boneham, one of the artistic directors. While it is a difficult piece to describe, except perhaps that the couples were suitably matched in Marie-Helene Gascon's costumes and with parallel idiosyncracies, we felt that perhaps the dramatic tension loosened too frequently in the process of the development of this dance. An astonishingly beautiful and willowy dancer emerged in the person of

Roberta Mohler, whose physical flexibility and stamina would befit many a yogi.

Mirage is a treasure which the company often displays in its travels. Choreographed by Peter Boneham, this piece represents an "emotional approach to dance", and utilizes a full screen film of Jean-Pierre Perreault wandering around nude in

the Alberta Badlands, with all the gradneur of these barren cliffs given full treatment.

During his trip into the desert (on the screen), delirium sets in for Perreault under the rays of the sun, but yet on stage we see a slightly different interpretation of the same thing. There he plays and dances around with a trio of evil and en-

ting spirits as if in some primitive voodoo ballet. While the tension increases and slackens alternatively, the dance is never totally "resolved", only discontinued, as an indication of the perpetuity of the fantasy that billows on stage.

This is a well-established Canadian company whose future visits to Toronto will be eagerly anticipated.

Cabaret munches melodramatic meat

By DANIEL MOSES

The York Cabaret opened its season last Thursday night with a special production entitled *The Goldiggers of 1898*, or *Reflections in a Golden Nugget*. This 'goldrush musical', complete with two acts and a song in each, was a product of the mind of Sky Gilbert, the Cabaret's new artistic director, who recruited this year's Cabaret company.

Goldiggers took off from the current fad for the poetry of Robert Service, and told 'the real story behind the shooting of Dan McGrew!!!' After the overture, played with magic fingers by Maestro Josh Roseh, Matt Walsh, almost convincingly grizzly as the Old Man, began his narration.

It seems that an honest Young Man with a dream, played with some passion by John Sweeney, loved rich and spoiled Louisa, played with admirable aplomb by Debbie Forsyth-Smith. Mother (Sally Clark) wanted her to marry Dangerous Dan McGrew (Ron Swartz), and so she did, which of course blew the young man's dream and led to the inevitable retribution in the Klondike (Yukon?) of act two, much better explained to the curious by Robert Ser-

vice himself.

David Chater, a snooty butler, John Koornstra, a bullied guy, and Amy Mouckley and Debbie Laughlin, dumb and sleazy bar room floozies, completed the cast and helped the production along its rollicking way.

The cliché meat of melodrama got a good chew, with its morality lam-

pooned in the songs *Something Beautiful...?* and *Forsyth-Smith's Loose Lou*. Attempts at upstaging approached slapstick extremes, and Maestro Rosen supplied ironic accompaniment.

Characters were broken, poses were struck, and comic spirit wreaked havoc, to the enjoyment of a receptive audience.



The *Goldiggers* of 1898; left to right: Amy Mouckley, Debbie Forsyth-Smith and Debbie Lachlan, as they appear in the Cabaret production.

Clapton's single gets shot down

OKLAHOMA (CUPI) — It's not often that a rock-oriented radio station bans the number one single in the United States, but Bill Payne, station manager for KWHP in Edmond, Oklahoma, has done just that.

Payne has forbidden his disc jockeys to play Eric Clapton's *I Shot the Sheriff*. Payne says the lyrics of the song celebrate a senseless violence that is pervading society.

In the song, Clapton sings that he shot the sheriff, but did not kill the deputy. Payne claims the character in the song "shot the sheriff because the sheriff burned down his marijuana patch. He said it was in self-defense.

"Now that's senseless."