

Variety in Dance Motif

University of Alberta Orchestras Presents
Dance Motif '88

review by Elaine Ostry

Orchestras hosted a night of modern dance last weekend, featuring a number of dance groups and a wide variety of styles. It is impossible to comment on all 14 pieces, but the evening certainly had its highlights.

The night opened to the gravelly strains of Tom Waits—you know, the one who sounds as if he's smoked too many cigars and drunk too much cheap beer. The number, "Tomb-boyz," matched the sultry style of the music. The costumes were inventive: white shirts with rolled-up sleeves, ties, and black tights.

The next number was completely different, and this sudden change from Tom Waits' blues to the drums of Morricone's *The Mission* soundtrack is indicative of the variety of the show. One would expect that the drum sequences of the music would inspire frenetic movement; however, the piece was ponderous, even sluggish. There was too much posing in the stilted choreography.

What was refreshing about the concert was the humour of many of the pieces. For instance, "Fluff: Land of the Wood Nymphs" satirized Greek myth to the tones of Zambir. The funniest number had to be "HUMORUS," choreographed by Dorothy Harris and Dancers. Instead of music, they danced to the sounds of hysterical laughter: they brought a laugh to life. This originality is the mark of good modern dance.

Another funny and original number was "Oh Yeah!" The dancers inspired laughs with their wildly bright costumes and wide eyes. An interesting moment was when the dancers rushed to the white backdrop and posed; the sudden change from a three-dimensional to a two-dimensional picture was startling.

Also commendable was "Vinyl Grooves," choreographed by Lindy Sisson. The movements corresponded to the mechanical music perfectly; one got the feeling that the dancers were the musical notes.

The show featured three solos, the best one of which was performed by Dorothy Anderson to the African-style music of John Cage. She had an extremely fluid and captivating style and great control over complicated movements.

Dance Motif '88 finished with a finale choreographed by Lindy Sisson, who started it off with a soft shoe dance in the spotlight—wearing a big suitjacket à la David Byrne. The entire cast of the production followed her lead, ending the show on a happy, dancing-is-fun note that was contagious. Sure enough, upon leaving the theatre I wanted to go out and dance up a storm.

Barfly soars with laughs

Barfly
Westmount Theatre
Cineplex Odeon films

review by Randal Smathers

Take one part film by Francis Ford Coppola, add equal parts Mickey Rourke and Faye Dunaway, shake over a script full of humour and pour. Garnish with a great soundtrack as a twist, and what do you get? You get *Barfly* cocktail—not too sweet, not too bitter, and wholly irresistible.



"To my friends!" — Mickey Rourke as Henry



"Vinyl Grooves" by Lindy Sisson

There are some things about this movie that you should know before you see it, however. First: this is not a pretty film—in fact, it is downright ugly. The fight scenes are repulsive. Rourke does altogether too convincing a job as a hopeless drunk, and the supporting cast look like they've been scraped off a skid row sidewalk somewhere. Even Faye Dunaway looks pretty sleazy, which is no mean feat.

The only saving grace is that there is no sex scene between Henry (Rourke) and Wanda

(Dunaway), which would be just too gross for words.

Now for some pluses, starting with the directing, which reminded me strongly of Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets*. The bars and bedrooms are all suitable dingy, but with a certain scumhole ambience which lends them enough charm to actually imagine barflies hanging out in them.

The characters are equally vivid and interesting, from the leads down to the old (not just aging, but old) hooker with the massive chest and the self-described ability to "swallow past" better than anybody else in the neighborhood." Also notable are the two bartenders: the one who feeds Henry free booze and the other who beats him nightly.

If the movie only showed skid row boozing, however capable, it would not be too interesting, and that's where the lead roles come in. Henry is a writer, and is pursued by a mysterious couple. The latter provides some suspense; the former provides a reason for some excellent repartee.

"I hate people," says Wanda to Henry, "Do you hate people?"

"No," says Henry thoughtfully, "but I'm happier when they're not around."

Imagine *Moonlighting*'s David and Maddie after a six-month bender, and you're starting to get the idea. The writers deserve all the credit for managing to create humour from life as a skid row bum without getting into cheap gags. They also manage to avoid preachiness, which is an unusual and noteworthy accomplishment: Wanda and Henry like drinking and aren't ashamed of it.

The soundtrack is an even blend of classical music and blues. The blues are primarily special arrangements for this film, written and performed by Booker T. Jones, who is most famous for his 1962 hit "Green Onions" with the M.G.s. It is the best, and best handled, soundtrack I have heard in a non-musical since the previously mentioned *Mean Streets*.

This movie may win some Oscars. It certainly deserves nominations for the score, the writing, and the acting; possibly for the directing as well. This film is worth the bus ride to Westmount, and worth \$6.50, let alone the \$3.50 on Tuesdays.

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