

ENTERTAINMENT

Robert Clinton writes and acts in play

Rock theatre revives story-telling

Interview by Gilbert Bouchard

"We're trying to do something new, and I think we've come up with something that is interesting and challenging at the same time," says playwright Robert Clinton of his new play *Man in the Jungle*.

Man in the Jungle opens at the Chinook Theatre tonight at eight, and can be described as "a rock band telling a story much like a story teller of the past," says Clinton.

The story the band is telling is of a group of soldiers on patrol. "We take the characters through a fire fight and through this patrol to a place where some moral decisions have to be made."

The play contains four songs — one for each character — plus a lot of atmospheric music. "The songs were written by Michael Becker who did the music to the Citadel's 1984 and *Peter Pan*, and I wrote the lyrics. The band also came up with some of the non-song tracks," said Clinton, "Becker has an understanding for Rock and Roll."

Clinton, who had a sell out success at this year's Fringe Festival with his Alberta Playwrighting Competition winning play *Mirage*, calls *Man in the Jungle* "not really a play, but more of a concert drama. My ultimate would be to do a dance. I would write a play where you could tell a story and let people dance."

Clinton, who acted in a show three years ago for the Catalyst Theatre about a rock



Robert Clinton, author of *Man in the Jungle*: "The play makes people realize just how fragile life is."

band and gets a lot of employment in the acting field because of his guitar playing (the play *Mirage* is about two Wild West wandering guitar players), was inspired by

the "power of rock and roll music. I'm trying to get access to that spirit and use it."

"This play is full of my friends," said Clinton, "one of the reasons I wanted to develop the play was to do a show where I could let these people use talents that they wouldn't use elsewhere."

Some of these friends include Francis Damberger (of late in Nexus Theatre's

Lonestar, Alan Penty, Kevin Smith (last seen in Vineyard Theatre's *Tent Meeting*), and director Luciano Iogna (who also directed Clinton's fringe production of *Mirage*).

Clinton, a graduate of Canada's National Theater School and the University of Regina, said he was "splitting himself in half," being both writer and one of the principle actors, but "one has to stop being the writer when one is in a show."

The show is not only demanding on the writer; it will be equally demanding on the audience. "We are demanding a lot, but we are also entertaining. We want people in the audience to be actively involved in the discovery of the piece," said Clinton.

"We're experimenting in how to tell a story in a different way. We think that university students will find the play easy to react to since they won't react like people who are more used to a traditional play."

"We want to constructively shake people up. There are too many things that destructively shake you up," said Clinton.

"Warfare is the biggest thing we have to solve today. *Man* has come to the limits of his existence and it's up to everybody to solve it," said Clinton.

"I want to get people's emotions involved in such a way that they have to bring their minds along. Rock and thought. I think that audiences are pretty intelligent and you don't have to talk down to them. I think the audiences will react well to this show," said Clinton.

Man in the Jungle plays until December 2 at the Chinook Theatre.

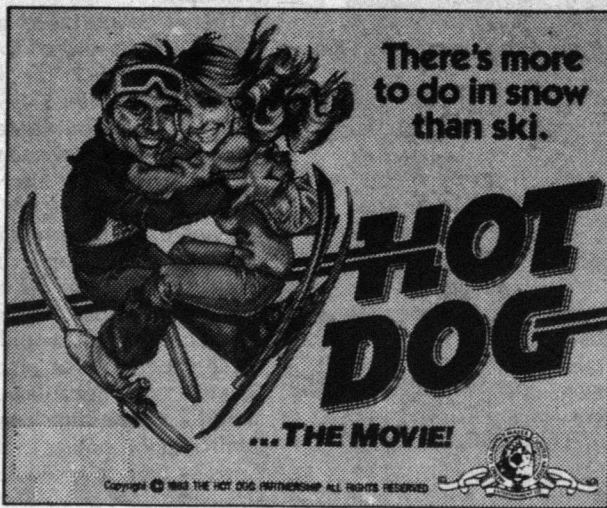
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