

What's up Doc? — terrible but funny

By EDNA NEWTON

What's up Doc? is a film catalogue of every cliché comic line and slapstick routine ever used. It's a terrible film — but it's funny. It's strictly mediocre, but with so many things crammed in there's something for everyone.

The big disappointment is that Peter Bagdonovich, of The Last Picture Show fame could write, produce and direct such a nothing film, and that Barbra Streisand and Ryan O'Neal would star in it.

Streisand sings the title song, that Cole Porter mouldy oldie You're the Tops, and a few bars from As Time Goes On, a smaltz number usually reserved for Andy Williams. That's all, nothing of quality.

Having never seen Love Story or Peyton Place, I had no preconceived notions about O'Neal, which is just as well. His performance is bound to be a disappointment for O'Neal fans.

The plot of the film centres around forward-girl-getting-bumbling-but-

hunky doctor of music — in the midst of espionage, jewel robberies, and competition for a study grant.

The main set is one floor of a plastic San Francisco hotel where all these types have their rooms and the same overnight bags containing their various treasure. For O'Neal the academic, its his igneous rocks, for Streisand, her pyjamas and toothbrush, for the spy, top secret files, and for some grand dame, her jewel collection.

The possibilities for silliness and slapstick after that are limitless. There's the classic chase scenes — on foot, in cars; the classic mix-ups and the classic lines. At one point, Streisand turns to a no personality slob and says, "has anyone ever told you you're sexy?" — They probably never will. . . .

There's laughs of that sort and some very funny cameo performances. The humor is infectious, but eventually the infection runs rampant and kills the film.



Barbra Streisand in What's Up Doc?

Dirty Harry is an action packed film

By DION McGRATH

The incredibly paranoid reaction of the critics to Don Siegel's Dirty Harry is an almost perfect case study of the unthinking liberal, totally unable to cope with a meaningful social statement. True, Dirty Harry is pro-cop propaganda but it is also the work of a major artist at the height of his powers, and one of the most honest films ever made on a social theme.

To call the film pro-cop propaganda is not to imply that it is the kind of dishonest, idealized representation typical of such television programs as Dragnet — the cop as everybody's friendly community helper. Siegel presents the cop as a legalized criminal ("The city of San Francisco does not pay criminals not to commit crimes; we pay a police force instead.") whose one justification is that he is a necessary evil in urban society.

Siegel's conception of the cop is expressed by the various meanings given to the nickname Dirty Harry. Harry Callahan (Clint Eastwood) is the guy who gets all the dirty jobs no one else is prepared to do. He is nasty, brutal, and friendless and his police methods are pragmatic but vindictive and frequently extra-legal. The causal relationship between the nastiness of Harry's job and the nastiness of his personality is clearly expressed through the characterization of his partner (Reni Santoni), a sympathetic liberal cop, complete with degree in sociology, who resigns after his first case. The implication is clear: a sane, normal human being cannot survive in the nightmare world where a homicide cop must work. Cops are brutal because they are called upon to do a job that only a brute would perform.

From this base, the film presents its main thesis simply by matching up Harry the nastiest cop we can reasonably imagine, with the nastiest criminal we can reasonably imagine. For anyone with any moral values, there is no question which is preferable. The killer (Andy

Robinson) is depersonalized into an allegorical representation of evil incarnate, a nameless sadist who lives in a football stadium and murders out of sheer enjoyment.

The main plot of the film is the struggle between Harry and the killer — two snarling beasts, one having on his side a limited good, while the other stands for pure negation — played out against background of San Francisco. Siegel's feeling for the urban environment is remarkably sensitive. The cement landscape becomes a fantasy world in which the monstrous brutalities of the story-line seem like the natural order of the things. With characteristic perversity, Siegel uses incidental visual symbolism to suggest that Harry is a Christ-figure.

The entire film presents Harry and the killer as sharing an essential identity. Harry's brutality and his contempt for regulations, whether legal or bureaucratic are clearly of the same order if not the same degree as the murderer's. The only difference is that Harry's anti-social drives are channeled into a form of some social value, while the killer's actions are wholly destructive. The visual style constantly emphasizes the parallels between the two characters and the final shooting of the killer is a visual echo of the first murder.

On the technical level Siegel is here at the top of his form and has given us one of the most exciting and action-packed crime movies ever made. It has one of the best crane shots in the history of the medium (a straightforward conversation between Harry and his partner's wife, transformed by the ominous downward and forward movement of the crane into an incredibly unsettling experience in rising tension) and the best helicopter shot I have ever seen in any film.

But what makes Dirty Harry a major work of art is its anguished and disturbing vision of a world in which police are inescapably necessary and inevitably brutal.

Four Vanier students publish a book of poems called Poems

Four members of Vanier College have recently published a small book titled simply Poems. The book contains about half-a-dozen poems by each of the people involved: Graham Field, Richard Truhlar, Gary Bell, and Larry Densmore. In the belief that people publish their poetry basically in the hope of getting reactions, the following comments are offered. My intent is not to hurt anyone's feelings, nor to place the poets in question in any sort of hierarchy of talents.

Larry Densmore's poems evidence a good ear for language and a willingness to experiment with words. Lines such as "A grass snake, seeing us in the heat, swam criminal along the side of the house" have a welcome quality of surprise and invention. The poem Waiting is a skilful evocation of that period just before taking off when you expect "things to come such as the ground ready to swell." The flaws in these poems largely arise from the problem of fitting imagist techniques into a contemporary voice; the poem Crowds fails because the connective "or" is not the best way to conjoin various images of one thing, due to the term's extremely neutral nature.

Gary Bell's poems convey a concern with social and interpersonal forces. Their language is often fairly close to that of prose. This deliberate eschewal of rhetorical fireworks goes well with the content of a poem like The Silence. It tends to lessen the intensity of poems dealing with more concrete subjects however, by saying too much; a poem like Frog would have more impact if it were haiku-length, and Impression No. 10 would similarly gain from compression. The personae of Mr. Emery and Tom are nicely established in the poem Station, but the closing lines "Emery just went to see God; and fell into her blackness", in their evocation of the old joke about God, insult both the reader's expectations and the

poem's more serious aspects.

Richard Truhlar is trying to place contemporary themes into established forms such as the sonnet. This is an extremely difficult thing to accomplish well; the poet has to be sure that his choice of a form does not lead to distortion or needless peroration on the inspiration. The latter pitfall is evident in a poem like Mantis; there are just too many images of death and destruction piling up and the last lines completely miss their intended effect because of this. Some of the rhymes and alliterations used seem forced, but the best poems John Of The Golden Locks and A Fearless Wind have original

images and musical qualities.

The last poems in the book are the work of Graham Field, who also hand-lettered the book. They are the most ambitious in terms of length and technique. Field also tries to use rhyme; most of it works, but a combination like "soma-home of" is somewhat jarring. An Iconography of Morning is the most successful poem, and is a good effort at working a sustained metaphor into a lyrical poem. The last lines "The people push out from the shadows of tall buildings. Faces find new clarity. A small child sings" are especially good. Field's best poems have commendable precision of expression.

Jimmy Blummer's Surd Sandwich has no filling

By LYNN SLOTKIN

Tarragon Theatre is presenting an evening of mediocre entertainment until April 1. For the first part of the evening Jimmy Blumer sang some of his songs. There was a sameness about them, both in tune and subject.

The rest of the evening was taken up with Blumer's play Surd Sandwich and after seeing it one can conclude the original title was Absurd Sandwich. This is absurd theatre, not at its best or worst, just mediocre.

The play is in three loosely connected sections. The first is about the rules people have to abide by whether or not they make sense. The second is a clever scene about a wife who tries unsuccessfully to set a table for four, and her husband who tries unsuccessfully to pack his car with seven pieces of luggage. Well I said it was absurd theatre. The last piece is about mediocrity, how people seem to blend into the woodwork and how they can't cope with the situation.

Robin Cameron and Les Carlson were marvelous as the wife and husband. They were both very serious in their delivery which made the situation even more humorous. Ron Ulrich was quite effective as the dartman. His quiet manner and deadpan expression made him seem sinister at times and angelic at others. Bob Coltri showed remarkable talent as a mime; he was extremely loose of limb.

The whole problem with the play was the play. I'm sure Blumer wanted to say something but it got lost in too many words that didn't make sense. If you want to make a statement about how mediocrity is easily forgotten you don't write a mediocre play which in turn will be forgotten as soon as you leave the theatre. If Blumer zeroed in on what he really wanted to say, and cut away all the stuff that wasn't necessary, the play would be infinitely better. As it stands with Surd Sandwich — frankly I prefer peanut-butter.

CULTURAL BRIEFS

Theatre students put on Weiss play

Senior performance students of the Program in Theatre will present The Song of the Lusitanian Bogey March 25, 27, and 28 and 8:30, and March 26 at 2:30 in Burton Auditorium. The play was written by Peter Weiss, the author of Marat Sade. It deals with the third world dilemma. Original music, film arrangements and choreography have been created to build the multimedia presentation. Tickets are free and may be obtained at Burton Box Office between the hours of 11:00 am and 2:00 pm Monday to Friday or by telephoning 635-2370.