

# ENTERTAINMENT

The razor-sharp writing of Neil Simon

## Dugan shares money and fantasy in new comedy

**MARSHALL GOLDEN**

If you have five exams, three essays and a rent payment all due in the next few weeks then perhaps you need a little Max Dugan. Max Dugan is as much a reality as he is a fantasy. He's as much of a curse as he is a

blessing and *Max Dugan Returns* is the title of one of the funniest movies of the year.

Jason Robards, in a brilliant performance, plays Max Dugan, an ex-con who has amassed a fortune (\$687,000) by swindling the people

in Vegas who swindled him earlier in life. Max has a daughter, Nora, who he abandoned when he was sent to the big house. Now, many years later, Nora, played refreshingly by Marsha Mason, has grown up and she and her son (Matthew Broderick) are struggling to get by on her teacher's salary. Everything is going wrong in Nora's life. Her car gets stolen, her house is falling apart and all the bills are due. When life is this bad, it can only get better--and it does! *Max Dugan Returns*.

On a misty rainy night, under the guise of a boarder looking for a room, Max shows up on Nora's broken doorstep with a briefcase in his hand. There are no clothes in this briefcase, however--just \$687,000 in cold, hard cash. Nora wants no part of Max and his questionably earned money. After all, there is still resentment from being abandoned. But it is damp and wet so she relents--for just one night.

It is in the morning that the magic starts to happen. The kitchen is filled with new appliances, stereos appear as does a new Mercedes-Benz in the driveway. The conflict is, of course, that as much as these winfalls are needed, the cash with which they were bought is slightly tainted.

What saves *Max Dugan* from being an unbelievable farce is the razor-sharp writing of Neil Simon, possibly one of Hollywood's funniest screen writers. The humour is brilliant and with the rapid paced editing there is never a dull moment. There are plot twists at every corner and it's hard to stop laughing as the audience shares the fantasy along with Nora.

The film does have an emphasis on the relationships between material possessions and happiness but these



Marsha Mason and Jason: fantasy and cold cash

kinds of ethical criticisms must be cast aside--this film is fantasy and makes no pretense otherwise. So if the pressures of year-end are getting you down and a pre-exam breakdown is imminent--don't see a doctor, just prescribe yourself a little Max Dugan.

## Paxton's easy one-man show makes political points with music

**AMELIA GOLDEN**

When Tom Paxton sings it's good fun for everyone. His one man show last Saturday night at the Music Hall, had a varied repertoire and gave the audience something to clap about. His musical talent made this concert one of the most enjoyable of the year.

The Paxton concert was put together simply; it was just a man and his guitar. The lighting was minimal and only enhanced the warmth and camaraderie in the Music Hall that night. There was nothing flashy in Paxton's manner. Talent needs no gimmicks to be appreciated.

The night was divided up into two parts with an intermission. The majority of the first half of the concert was "nonsense" songs. For example, Republic airlines was grilled for breaking Paxton's guitar. Jogging and joggers were laughed at as was the Rubik's cube. After the audience was hit with the humor, it was time for the more serious songs--those that were funny and simultaneously touching. The tale of a great baseball player who was sent off to war was recalled and a song about hope for "slow", or disabled people brought tears to everyone's eyes.

After the intermission it was time for the political songs. They too were humorous but had a message. Paxton, being rooted in America, spent most of his time ridiculing the stupid things that the leaders of his country have done. Nancy Reagan and her gun as well as Ronald

Reagan's various bumbles were satirized. Jimmy Carter, who shot a rabbit in his boat, was ridiculed in a song entitled "I don't want an itty bitty bunny in my wittle wow boat".

During Paxton's two encores the future of the earth was portrayed as a world without color. His last song of the evening, and the last words the audience hear from him, were, "peace will come, let it begin with me."

But most captivating of all was Tom Paxton's stage presence. No song was sung without Paxton first telling the audience the reason he wrote it or the story behind it. He put everybody at ease with homely chatter and funny anecdotes. The audience joined in on the chorus of every song which, at first glance, might seem a bit immature for a primarily middle-aged audience, but it gave them the much-needed chance to vent their daily frustrations.

The only thing that marred the evening was a half-hour delay in the start of the concert. Apparently the sound engineers forgot to come back from their dinner and in addition, there was a bit of confusion after the owner of the Heritage Theatre, the concert's original venue, locked the workers out over a dispute concerning rent payments. The Music Hall, however, worked with the Heritage to make the concert happen.

Paxton's charm does not force you to think: it lets you do so with ease and with pleasure.

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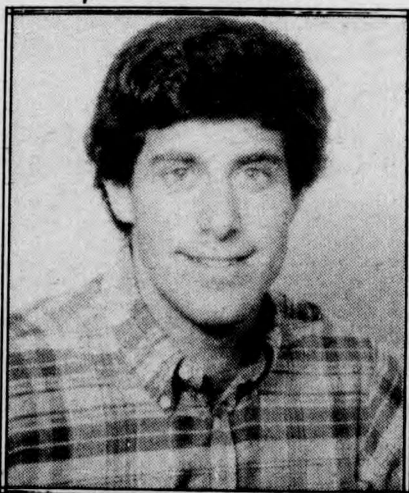
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