

The arts

T'ree plucky Canucks

Everyone cheered as band member Bob Bossin led a smoking ban during performance. Anywhere a suggestion might have met with less compliance, the Hovel good-will is granted.

Marie-Lynne Hammond, another member of the group featured there last week. "This is one of the best places in Canada in terms of audience response. They're less inquisitive and not afraid to call out. There are very few good places and this is one of them." Stringband themselves present the Hovel's easy-going relaxed atmosphere.

Presenting a pleasing mix of traditional and home-grown tunes guaranteed to set the mind at ease. The group consists of three players: Terry on fiddle (replacing Alexander Ben Mink), Bob mostly on banjo, and Marie-Lynne Hammond, mostly on guitar. (They all interchange instruments a lot.)

Between the three they play a whole string of slow-tempo, toe-tapping, clapping, knee-slapping, rickety side-splitting, city-style city-living down-comparable ALL CANA-Melodies!

Putting that on the back record jacket.

Aid description would apply to Stringband's paragon of music though, by the way can be heard on either of the group's albums, *Canadian Sunset* and *National Melodies*. (Inferior quality on the first, worthwhile nevertheless.) Stringband's own distinctive approach to music is evidenced by these two titles. Do they indeed play a coast-to-coast cross-section of Canadian melodies, ranging from French-Canadian (you guessed it - sung in French) to Scottish Canadian from the Maritimes to - of things - even a North-Canadian Indian love song.

Stringband is so Canadian that record companies refuse to produce their music here it won't sell south of the border.

They all said it (their sealbum) was too Canadian, says Marie-Lynne, "not commercial enough. They don't think anyone in the states wants anything like this kind of stuff because it's Canadian. They don't want to gamble on it - even the stations in Toronto won't play it."

After all, who wants to hear about Diefenbaker and the Albert, Saskatoon and Vancouver? Not Americans, but - what about Canadians? Possibly they're interested because apart from the identifiable cultural image the group puts across, the music they play does have other

namely, it is vastly appealing. The band plays both earthy, day-living ballads and stories of wit, all glossed

over with Stringband's casual staging and presentational prowess. (Note Bob's fine finger pluckin' and Marie-Lynne's lovely clear voice - in two languages).

One tune fitting into the second category of song mentioned is *Show Us The Length* a semi-saucy, sorta-sexist spoof on beauty contests and male participation in aforementioned events. Get the picture?

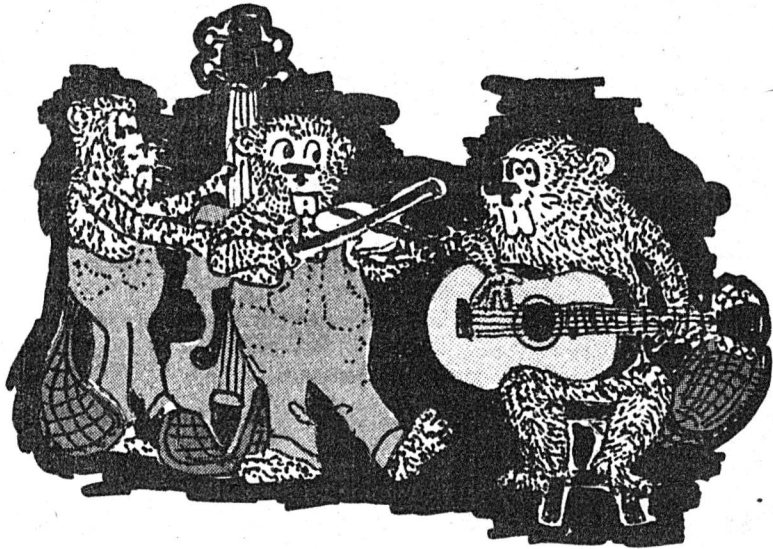
It's a pity this group doesn't get more airing than the occasional song on CBC Radio, because they really are good. So good that they went ahead and produced their own albums

Beyond the Door, currently featured at the Towne Cinema, is a movie which will hopefully be the film industry's last attempt at shocking their audience; an audience which is so conditioned to terror and agitation that nothing except the most sublime and perverse

after record companies turned them down, and are now finding they have quite a following of dedicated fans across the country. (Standing room only at the Hovel, for instance.)

The trio also does all their promoting, and because of this attendance is sometimes low, though reception is always warm. Perhaps it is this very independence that prompted Bob to say "I don't know if we'll ever be famous. I'd be satisfied with making a decent living."

Stringband - talented, open, unpretentious, undiscovered. I hope they make it.
Kim St. Clair



French take off with Russian seagull

"All life, having completed the dreary round imposed upon it, has died out at last. A thousand years have passed since the earth last bore a living creature on her breast, and the unhappy moon now lights her lamp in vain."

These are the words of the aspiring young writer Constantine, one of the major characters in Chekov's play *The Seagull*, now being presented at St. John's College by Edmonton's French Theatre. They are words of despair, a despair born of the boring sterile existence in the upper echelons of late 19th century Russian society.

They also represent Constantine's attempt to introduce new forms in to a literature which he feels is stagnating. Thus, *The Seagull* is in part concerned with the age-old conflict in literature between the new, as represented by Constantine, and the old, as represented by Boris Trigorin, a successful author who visits the country estate where the action of the play takes place.

But the essence of *The Seagull* lies much deeper. Unre-

quitted love, broken aspirations and the search for meaning in life are some of the major themes which run like parallel currents throughout the play, combining in order to portray with typical Chekovian complexity the nature of human existence.

Chekov achieves this difficult task with clever dialogue, revealing the intricate web of relationships which link the various characters. Because little action is involved, a good deal of skill is required to present the play convincingly and dynamically. The French Theatre has succeeded in their effort, despite the fact that the cast is composed solely of amateur actors.

Maurice Arpin, in the role of the young writer, manages to express the mixture of fervour, self-consciousness and despair fundamental to the character. Evelyn Olsen succeeds equally well in the role of the naive young woman who aspires to the glory of the stage only to encounter pitfalls of suffering and doubt. Bernait Pariseau is excellent as the experienced,

will face it.

Perhaps the reason for the senseless and incoherent plot in this movie is that the story itself plays second lead to the film's most prominent feature: vulgarity. And although the main theme concerns demonic possession, *Beyond the Door* is essentially an in-depth study of human deterioration.

The movie's two main characters consist of the devil's prey, Jessica (Juliet Mills) and a mysterious male named Dmitri (Edward Montoro). The personality exposure of these and the other characters is so limited that they seem as artificial as Jessica's 'affliction' does. The characters are forced to say the most unnatural out-moded clichés. In fact, one of the most prevalent aspects of the film is that it seems outdated: Mini-skirts and purple pantyhose as well as 'uptight' and 'blow your cool', are obvious anachronisms.

Symbolism in this film seems to be an experiment - the few attempts at it add to the already confusing theme and it seems they were abandoned in midstream. The viewer is left pondering over the significance of this symbolism and wondering if there is, in fact, any at all. This is one of the film's greatest pitfalls, for, if the symbolism does not relate how can it's meaning be understood?

For example, Jessica's pregnancy plays a crucial role in regards to plot development, yet its existence proves of little symbolic importance and gives no clue as to the chronological aspect of the film.

The deterioration of Jessica's physical and mental welfare is the most highly stressed feature of the film. Vomiting and irritability precede the development of split personalities as well as more

physical activities such as eating garbage, rotating one eye, and levitating, to name a few. So much time is devoted to her corrosion one feels sickened and repulsed.

Yet these are not the most upsetting aspects of the film. One may feel disturbed by the fact that unlike *The Exorcist* or *Rosemary's Baby*, there is no good force counteracting the evil. The individuals who try to help Jessica are either so dense or naive that they appear to be bumbling clods.

The movie's biggest shock is something which becomes apparent during the listing of credits. The crew is completely Italian, and the movie itself is shot in Rome and San Francisco.

In any light, *Beyond the Door* is nothing more than a cheap attempt to cash in on two successful movies of the same genre. It combines elements from *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist* in an attempt to make its existence plausible.

It fails.

Jamie Stanley

Bi-locals tour

It's hard to think of the last time (or first) that a government agency or department has looked at Western Canada for bilingual content. And it may not be the first time that the Department of National Defence has considered an entertainment proposal from Western Canada, but this is the first time that such a proposal has been accepted.

Highlighting the line-up are Bob Ruzicka, who is presently taping his own CBC network music series; bilingual singer recording artist Gabrielle Bugeaud; talk-show host Bob Comfort; and versatile Andre Roy, CBXFT sportscaster.

world-wise country doctor, an important character who is present in many of Chekov's plays.

The other characters are also done justice by the cast of Edmonton's French Theatre and the whole group deserve hearty

congratulations on their excellent production of a most difficult form of theatre.

The Seagull will be playing Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings at College St. Jean at 8:30 pm.

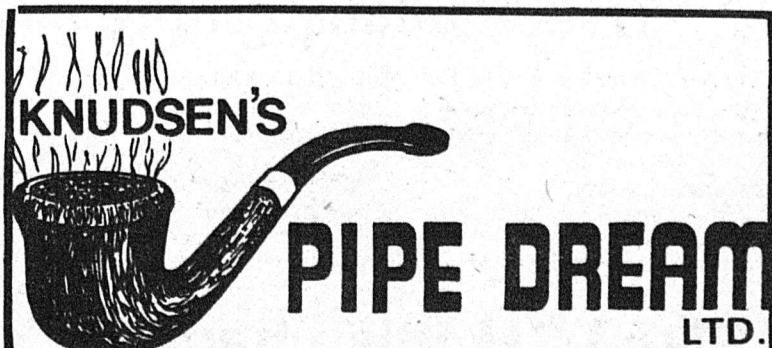
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