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Rock musical is full of bad noise

By MICHAEL CHRIST

It's hard to believe that directors are really so blind sometimes that they require a poor student critic to give them advice. Yet, every now and then a play comes along that gives me the confidence to believe that there is a role for even the most pedestrian of reviews. New Theatre's production of Michael

Hollingsworth's *White Noise* is a case in point.

When a play has serious faults it is very easy to dismiss it by delivering a well-aimed profanity. Such profanity, artfully used as adjectives, verbs, or even nouns, can be used colourfully in familiar address: However, a newspaper demands both elegance and an awareness of the potential damage utter frankness of expression can bring.

To start, I must honestly declare my dislike for musicals in general and rock musicals in particular. Perhaps it's the inane dramatic structure or the irritating way the participants step out of character and burst into song at a moments provocation. Plot, if it is recognizable, is a device to give some semblance of continuity between song and dance numbers. The musical content itself never rises to the level of perfection found in other works, which are created in a need for self-expression rather than crude commercial gain. That musicals do indeed enjoy commercial success is a mystery at times. Isolating the elements of a musical, they contain neither good music nor good drama.

Dramatically, the playwright of *White Noise* Michael Hollingsworth, is never sure whether he is writing an amusing tragedy or a comedy with an unhappy ending. Both directions seem rather inept. As tragedian Mr. Hollingsworth has used a veneer of Homeric tradition to give his plot some semblance of significance. It reminds me of an old high school device we used in giving our poetry some metaphysical dimension by throwing in some Jesus - on - the - cross symbolism just for good

measure, the device seems no better now than it was then.

As a comic writer Mr. Hollingsworth is in his element. His high-camp dialogue is amusing and witty. His use of blue words are a "likely gambit" but they are used in a most apt and refreshing manner. If the playwright had understood his own limitations and kept to his comic intent, the play would have been an exciting rock comedy rather than a rather pretentious excuse for self-exhibitionism.

Likewise, many of the faults in the production were the result of personnel not understanding their own strengths and weaknesses. The star, Dianne Heatherington, should be aware that she doesn't always use her contralto voice to best advantage. She is not a screamer: When she tries to belt out the songs her words become indistinct and unintelligible. She doesn't have the hard edge to her voice to successfully do a Janis Joplin imitation, her own soft croon is effective in its own right and immensely pleasurable.

Her co-star, Patrick Christopher, is miscast as Miss Heatherington's older brother. He was not only older than the entire cast (two of which were intended to be his parents), but he was probably older than anyone in attendance. An actor who plays the part of a decadent rock queen with such physicality should be aware that an aging and undisciplined body makes for a pathetic, if not grotesque display.

Lest anyone remain guiltless, the remaining actors, Jeff Braunstein and Janet Wright, should be chastised for allowing their comic talent to be compromised by their association with such a dubious production.

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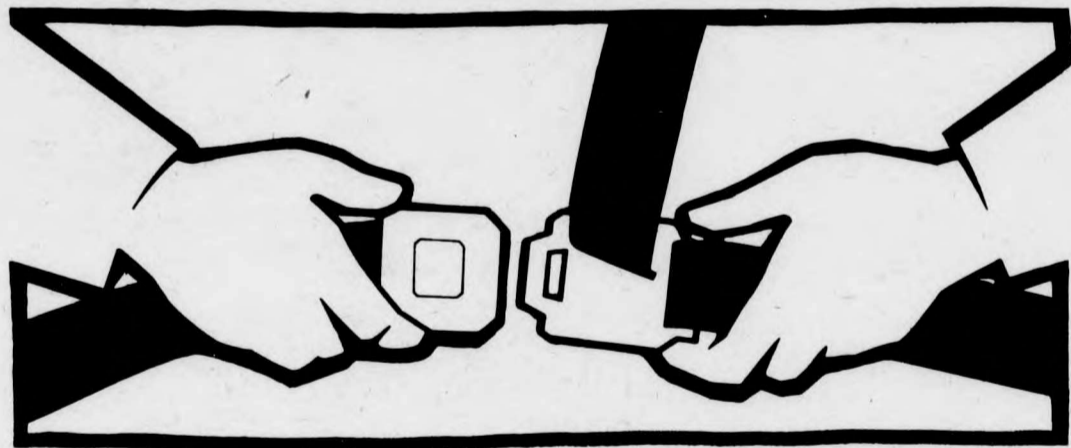
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Just take the Lupin Express: A bunch of benevolent turkeys I am forced to cohabit with on the fourth floor of McLaughlin have conspired to hold a disco on Saturday. It's aimed at all lovers of Monty Python and Star Trek, and along with the regular hits, you'll hear such rockers as Boogie Klingon and Donna Summer's rendition of the Lumberjack Song. The 50 cent admission goes to help the kids at York Daycare. It's licenced. Bring your own Spam.

Vive les patates frites: Dubbed as "York's contribution to the bilingual problem", The regular cast of York's ever-humble Cabaret is presenting *The Return of Claude Fortin*. You can catch the last two shows tonight at 9 and 10:30 in Mac Hall. It's licenced, too, but no Brador. Damn.

Will he come on late if he wins a game?: Peter Gzowski plays pinball in his office before each show of *90 Minutes Live*; This and other tasty tidbits are revealed in next week's *Excalibur*. In the meantime, the CBC is continuing the Monday and Tuesday night busses from York. They leave Stong at 9 and Vanier at 9:15. The return ride is also included afterwards. Most guests are not really confirmed until the day of each show, so for the most current lineups, phone the CBC at 925-3311.

E.L.

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