

# Entertainment

## Foolin' with passion at the Citadel

**Fool for Love**  
Citadel Theatre  
til April 6

review by James MacDonald

Eddie and May draw slowly towards each other, as if pulled by an immensely powerful invisible magnet. They join in a tender, steamy embrace. The kiss gets more and more passionate, with tongues probing and hands busying themselves. May breaks off, looks lustfully into Eddie's eyes, and firmly plants her knee swiftly and squarely into Eddie's groin. As Eddie doubles over in intense pain, May runs into the bathroom and slams the door, the sound reverberating throughout the room...

This scene, played out near the beginning, is a microcosm of *Fool for Love*, Sam Shepard's savage comedy about obsessive love, which opened at the Citadel's Maclab Theatre last week. Shepard has emerged as possibly the number one modern playwright, with his vivid naturalistic style. *Fool for Love*, a 1984 Obie award winner for Best New American Play, is one of Shepard's best and most accessible plays.

Eddie is a part-time cowboy, part-time stuntman, who has come to a dingy motel room on the edge of the Mojave Desert ostensibly to retrieve his lover, May. May has come to the motel to build a life away from Eddie, whom she can't live with, but also can't live without. Enter Martin, a gentleman caller of May's, who is unaware of Eddie's relationship with May. Observing, and occasionally taking part in the scene, is the Old Man, whose connection becomes apparent as the play progresses.

Shepard deals with obsession here in a big way. This play is hot. One gets the feeling that Eddie and May are either going to jump into bed or throw each other through the walls. Theirs is no ordinary love affair.

Shepard also deals with the problems of parent-child relationships, so prevalent a theme in modern drama. He however, twists the theme in a thoroughly modern way, a way in which a Miller or a Williams would never think of... The modernization

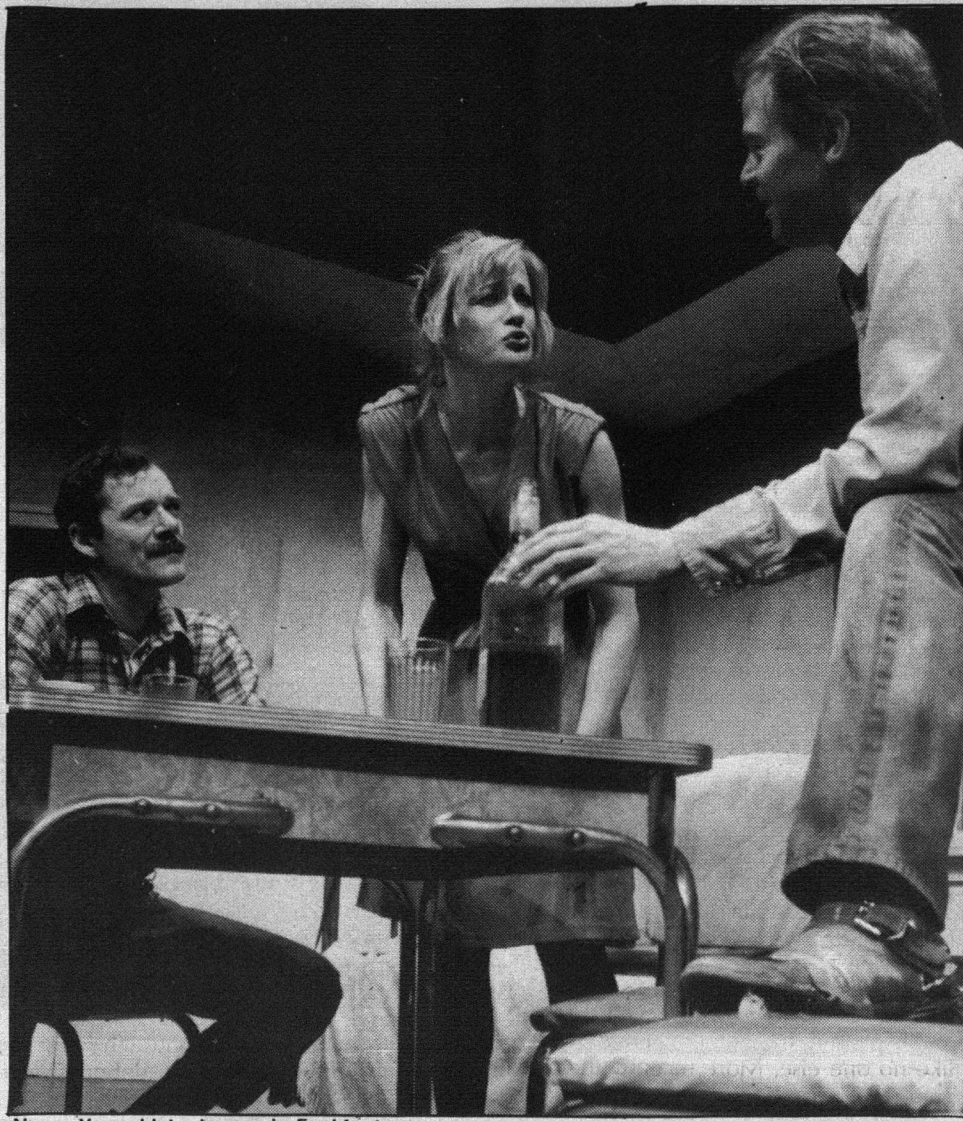
of the theme is built on Shepard's acute observation of modern society.

Jake Turner, as Eddie, is tuned in to the comedy of the play, while keeping the proper perspective on its much more serious underlying themes. Turner carefully observes and works off of his fellow actors, with an excellent grasp of Eddie's inner struggles and torment. Peter Millard as Martin at times resembles a southern-fried Don Knotts, stuttering his way to the comprehension of Eddie and May's incomprehensible relationship. Millard is more than capable, projecting very well Martin's attempts to maintain the correct focus on what Eddie and May play out before him. The Old Man is effectively played by Nesbitt Blaisdell.

Only Nancy Youngblut as May is a disappointment. May's obsession rips her to shreds in this play, bouncing her around the motel room like a jumping bean. May is like a cat, stealthy in its approach, yet extremely wary. Youngblut takes the image too much to heart and fails to project any real emotion. Her movements and speech, instead of being those of a woman possessed by inner struggle and obsession, are those of an actress following difficult stage directions.

Director Kurt Reis has a keen eye for Shepard and orchestrates his actors carefully. Shepard himself, in the script, provides intricate stage directions as to the stage movement. Reis creates well Shepard's image of Eddie and May as "caged animals", given the limitations of the thrust theatre. He too, however, gets caught up in a purely visual outlook of the play, and fails to create any rising dramatic intensity. As a result of this failing and of Youngblut's lacklustre performance, the stunning revelations at the play's climax are not convincing and not shattering.

The design of the play is interesting, to say the least, given that it was written for a proscenium stage. The room forms a broken triangle, with the old man sitting at the apex of the triangle, out of the room, looking in. The much used doors (to the outside and to the bathroom) are at the corners. These doors are microphoned, giving each slam of the door a reverberating boom like a bang



Nancy Youngblut grimaces in *Fool for Love*

on an electric drum. This is Shepard's stylish concept, used well as punctuation for this rapid moving play.

Despite the problems with this production, one can see that *Fool for Love* is destined to be a minor American classic. It is beautifully crafted by its playwright, who is

the foremost of this generation. Turner's performance also helps to make it worth catching. One may get a few more laughs than starts in this production of the play, but it remains an important work. This is the final production of an entertaining season of theatre in the Maclab.

## Lessing advocates realism over group lunacy

**Prisons We Choose To Live Inside**  
Doris Lessing  
CBC Enterprises

review by Susan Sutton

The William E. Massey lecture series, inaugurated in 1983 with Mississippi author Eudora Welty's *One Writer's Beginnings*, now offers us five lectures from Doris Lessing, collected in the slim volume of *Prisons We Choose To Live Inside*.

In her lectures, Lessing examines the broad spectrum of human misbehaviour — war, tyranny, bigotry, oppression — as historical phenomena. She projects herself into the distant future in an attempt to see the present age in its eventual historical context.

She labels ours "The Age of Belief", in which the human community is divided into groups or factions, all of whom believe their way to be true, and who look with anything from pity to hatred upon "unbelievers". The prevailing attitudes are ones of absolute rights and wrongs, black and white.

Lessing goes on to speak of the behaviour of such groups, be they communists, fascists, atheists, evangelists, as a kind of "mass lunacy", in which "bestial" behaviour is justified by members because of their fanatical belief.

She speaks of experiments in the fields of sociology and psychology which bear out the connection between the "group mind" and this "end justifies the means" attitude, pointing out that it is well known that few individuals can hold out against the group and that most will submit to the general group action. (The German soldiers in WWII who were only following orders are a prime example.)



This group brainwashing is a well-known tool for the powerful, from military dictators to advertising executives. The techniques have been amply demonstrated by social scientists. What Lessing feels will puzzle future generations is the fact that we have not used the knowledge to combat the action, to fight for individual freedom of thought.

Lessing feels that if we apply that knowledge, as well as our knowledge of history and literature, which contributes to (or perhaps entirely constitutes) our knowledge of ourselves, we can escape this age of belief.

She believes, in fact, that the escape has

already begun, and that more and more people are breaking free from the chains of bigotry and asserting the value of free, individual thought. She believes that such people should be encouraged instead of suppressed and that children should be taught the tricks and deceptions of their society:

"You are going to have to live in a world full of mass movements, both religious and political, mass ideas, mass cultures. Every hour of the day you will be deluged with ideas and opinions that are mass produced, regurgitated, and whose only real vitality comes

from the power of the mob. You are going to be pressured—all your life to join mass movements... It will seem to you many times in your life that there is no point in holding out against these pressures, that you are not strong enough."

Of course Lessing does not expect the government to suddenly begin speaking thus, but she feels that parents and individual teachers can make the difference. By teaching history and literature, which she calls simply forms of anthropology, we will gain a sharper understanding of human nature and thus learn to work around it and with it instead of fighting it.

In *Prisons We Choose To Live Inside* Lessing asks us to face some pretty brutal truths about ourselves. She admits that many simply won't be able to do so because these truths are so contrary to how we as a species like to see ourselves. But she believes the trend is towards this realistic self-evaluation and that we will eventually struggle free of our "group lunacy."

Lessing's is an interesting book, largely because it approaches its subject from an unusual angle and also because, while it points out the uglier side of human nature, its message is one of hope. Lessing herself has had ample first hand observation, living through the two world wars and the terrible struggle of Zimbabwe. Also, she has the keen and relatively objective eye of the writer, that recorder of society, who must also remain distinct. There will be many who disagree, but much of what Lessing offers us here seems obvious once it is pointed out so succinctly. Recommended.