

# The Mauve Bat comic strip takes the stage

Interview by Sheri Ritchie

"I think theatre should be more like a painting," Evan Grain squints and sucks defiantly on his cigarette. "The image is more important than what is being said."

Grain is the creator of *The Mauve Bat*, a University comic strip, and now a play running at Chinook Theatre from February 10 to 14.

"What I'm trying to put across with *The Mauve Bat* is a series of images," he leans forward, "nothing more."

The somewhat ostentatious playwright grew up in the West Indies, the only child of

wealthy Canadian parents.

"I used to get together with the Indian children and act out plays on the beach," he says. "The first play we made up was called eight big chairs — I was a tablecloth."

Since his return to Canada with his parents in 1985, Grain has involved himself in everything from cartooning to improvisational theatre to writing.

Grain created *The Mauve Bat* for *The Grind* newspaper in his first year of University. He wanted it to do something different than other campus cartoons. "I wanted the joke to be something other than beer," he says.

"*The Mauve Bat* is about evil villains, inther desire, and pretty women," he explains. "It's pretty cool."

The cartoon strip has not been running this semester, as Grain has been in Israel undergoing treatment for hellepnia, a rare muscle disease. "I have absolutely no control over my facial muscles," he says, smiling. "It's kind of like the way Harrison Ford acts — when he's smiling he may actually be frowning. He has hellepnia, that's why his acting is so erratic."

It was last January (1987) when Grain decided to work the cartoon into a play. From that idea developed *The Angry River Theatre Group*.

"None of us have met before in our lives," Grain says. "Up until now all of the rehearsals have taken place over the phone. We hope to meet before the play starts."

The character of the Mauve Bat is played by Brad Smilnich. "From what I've heard over the phone, Brad has entirely become the Mauve Bat, a slightly misguided creature with an inherent desire to do good deeds."

Jennifer Keene is Elizabeth the waitress, and is said by Grain to be "probably the most fascinating actress you will have seen since you were born."

And not to overstate his case, Grain describes the dance troupe tango band as "brilliant." L'Ensemble de Trois Elements de



Byron: A subliminal man

Photo courtesy Angry River Theatre Group

Montreal play the Antlermen, Larry the Tree and the Other Tree. "They were playing a bar in St. Paul when I saw them; they played five hours straight — no breaks," he says. "You think they'd be limited, being a violin and drum tango band, but no. Amazing!"

Grain says the strip will continue in *The Gateway* after the play. "My hellepnia is under control," he smiles. He also says to watch for Mauve Bat t-shirts in the near future. "They sold well enough last time to get me to Israel."



The Mauve Bat contemplates...

Photo courtesy Angry River Theatre Group

## Ritter in Res is Ridiculous

Ritter in Residence  
Erika Ritter  
McClelland and Stewart

review by P.J. Groeneveldt

Do you like the comic strip "Cathy"? Could you take it without the cute little pictures? Could you stand 196 pages of that sort of humor?

The title chosen for this collection of dubious entertainment is a very bad pun, which should be enough to alert you to the nature of its contents. In this book we learn "One Hundred Uses for a Dead Relationship" and see Erika learn to flirt at the "Institute of Submissiveness Training." Whee. Some of this stuff is funny. Every once in a while there is the twinkle of a laugh shining out: an image I offer is of a broken beer bottle on a pile of compost. This book was written for a

certain audience, an unfortunately large one — the thirty-plus reader of useless fluff (probably female).

"HEY!" you cry in their defense, "at least they've outgrown Erna Bombeck!" True. These readers have progressed from the completely sexually biased housewife humourist to the almost-completely sexually biased working-woman humourist.

This is a book for anyone who still "does lunch." This is a book for jealous single women who have friends with children. It's a book for anyone who entitled their last sociology report, "Fred, Wilma, and Sexism in Popular Culture." In fact, this book is for (gulp!) those people between twenty-five and forty, the professionals, living in urban areas. You know exactly who I mean, but I refuse to use that Y-word in print.

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