

# Entertainment

Sex, death, and Nixon

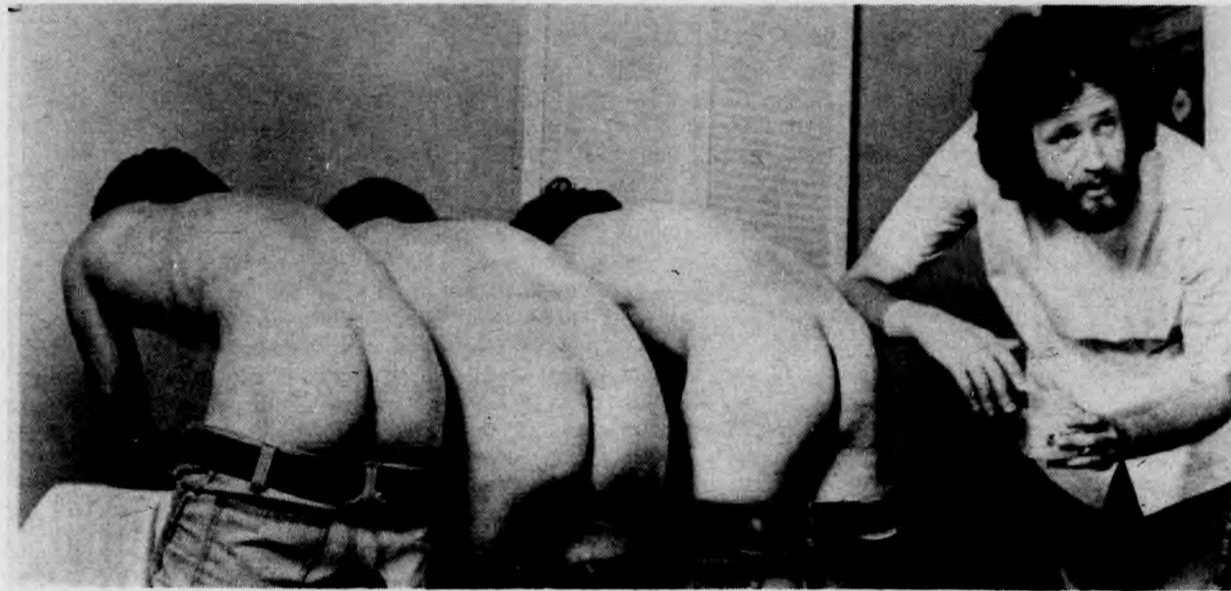
## Tunnel Vision overdoes old, worn out ideas

By EVANLEIBOVITCH

Remember those illustrious days of comedy of the late sixties and early seventies? Rowan and Martin had a fast tempo, highly successful Laugh-In; the Firesign Theatre had completed *We're all Bozos on This Bus*, an underground parody of Disneyland that became a classic; the emergence of Cheech & Chong, George Carlin, and National Lampoon recordings and texts; *Blazing Saddles*, the three Musketeers, and *American Graffiti* all kept the masses in stitches.

What do we have to replace them with now? Firesign and Python are gone, Lampoon now caters to cool teenagers who won't be caught dead with *Mad* magazine, the movies are still popular but dated, and the rest are probably past their prime. Richard Pryor and Lily Tomlin aside, there haven't been too many present acts that could get their stuff together, and *Murder by Death* is more the exception than the rule. So it was with great hope and a heavy heart that I went to see *Tunnel Vision* at the Odeon York.

My anticipation grew as I watched the shorts which preceded the feature. *Banapple Gas*, which I had first seen on *Midnight Special*, was filmed around Cat Stevens' song of the same name. The only thing of merit in the film was the fact that the music was recorded in a cute little studio in Quebec.



Dr. Manuel Labor does an ad for the Columbia School of Proctology correspondence course.

Otherwise, pure throwaway.

The next was similarly written around a song, this time *Basketball Jones* by Cheech and Chong. They should've stuck to records.

The two original shorts were much more amusing. The first one was about a quasi-sexual bout between a woman and a tennis ball shooting machine. The last short, called *The Critic*, was what turned out to be the most amusing event of the night, using some interesting Norm McLaren-style animation.

By the time the shorts were over, I was already getting weary of the

too-quick pace that was so prominent in all of them. It was with slight relief that I watched the opening credits, marked with the unique eye-in-the-mouth logo and some cruddy rock music.

The credits were impressive. Chevy Chase, now hot property since his performances on *Saturday Night*, was in for a bit role, and none other than Phil Proctor, late of Proctor and Bergman and even later of *Firesign*, playing the one lead role. In the movie, Proctor is Christian A. Broder, head of *Tunnel Vision*, a TV network

devoted to "no bullshit".

It is the year 1985. *Tunnel Vision* has caused mass unemployment while millions spend all day watching the *Tunnel*. Broder has been accused by a Senate Committee of corrupting people's minds with the stuff he broadcasts.

To substantiate the claims, an abbreviated schedule of the day's programming is shown. This is the perfect vehicle for the producers of the film to show the initial ideas for their TV parodies without being forced to dwell on plots for each one. In fact, during the course of the "screening", there are more ads than programmes (this includes ads for future programmes). So much for the style, which turns out to be more rapid-fire than the shorts were.

The content and the ideas come nowhere near the brilliance of the roots of this movie, which most definitely lie in *Laugh-In* and

*National Lampoon*. Taking every one of the original concepts of these roots and exaggerating them has been the function of *Tunnel Vision*. The logo is repeated enough times to lose its shock value and become almost repulsive by the film's end.

The segments hover basically around four subjects; Nixon, sex, death and retarded or handicapped people, all set to a framework of TV programming.

Examples: "Charlie's Girls" about the Manson family; a Mary Tyler Moore facsimile engaging in on-air heavy petting; a programme about Curt Gowdy and friends going to the park to shoot faggots; a commercial urging folks to phone their loved ones in the hereafter (the next best thing to being there); a flasher giving an editorial response; and ad for feminine deodorant in a vibrator shaped roll-on; and a game show which decides the winner by determining who can fart first. Using this short list of excerpts, if you still think it's funny, you deserve to see the rest.

Technically, *Tunnel Vision* has its ups and downs. Although the cinematography is good enough to be the only redeeming virtue of the film, the sets used in the "studio" programming are conspicuously cheap looking. As well, the attempt to duplicate TV reception on the movie screen is awkward at best, and annoying at worst.

To sum it up, if this is the direction modern humour is going, then it would be most advisable to stock up on reruns of *Dick Van Dyke*, or even *I Love Lucy*. For if this concept of using shock values for laughs, and then repeating them ad absurdum is going to be predominant, I'll keep the old stuff, thank you.

## Canadian musical shines

By BELINDA SILBERMAN

Although Canada is not too well known for its musicals, *Anne of Green Gables* is one that it can be proud of. An enthusiastic rendition of the home-grown classic is now playing at the Scarborough Music theatre.

Set on Prince Edward Island, the story is about a red-haired freckled orphan, Anne Shirley (Denise Pidgeon) who is sent to live with a brother-sister couple on a farm.

On arrival, Anne is heartily welcomed by her prospective guardians with the words "but we specifically requested a boy - she'll have to be sent back".

Of course, Anne's vibrant character soon triumphs and the couple (Joyce Clark and Barry Nesbitt) become affectionately attached to her imaginative charm.

The music, performed live by a small orchestra above the stage, is led jauntily by Paul Feheley. Unfortunately there aren't too many catchy tunes, but the melodies are still pleasant and the musicians, relaxed and good-natured.

Anne's first day at school was well staged. The schoolmaster, (John Allin) was far more interested in the beautiful Prissy Andrews (Jan Dobbs) than in the

rest of his students. Somehow however, he does manage to tear himself away from Prissy, and calling the class to attention by sharply ringing a small school bell, the opening exercise begins.

At the end of intermission, the schoolmaster enters the lounge area and dressed in costume, he again rings the bell, this time calling the audience "back to class". This is just one of the many unique touches the Scarborough Music Theatre has added to the show.

Fine performances were given by the entire cast and the singing was on-key throughout, although at times a little weak.

All aspects of production were well done but, one complaint! This viewer, who sat six rows back, could not make out any freckles on Anne's face!

Despite this trivial flaw however, the play is full of spirit.

On one memorable scene at the Sunday school picnic, this Scarborough company truly displays boundless energy-dancing, running races and singing songs about ice cream.

Apparently real ice cream cones are used, and in the finale, those

fortunate viewers seated in the front rows, are graciously presented the vanilla cones. Thus the sparkling flavour of the performance lingers on even after it's over.

## Witty script and Bogart double highlight dull Open Circle play

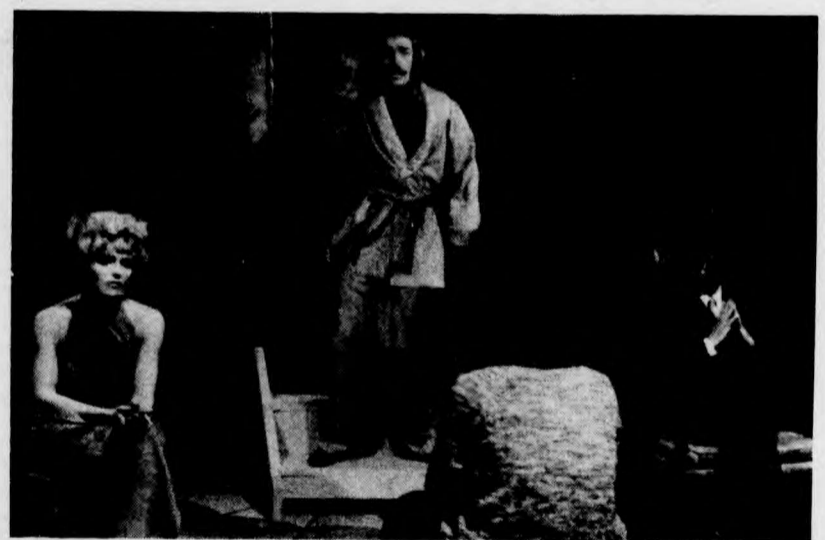
By BOB POMERANTZ

Attention lovers of wild witticisms, buxom blondes and Humphrey Bogart — be on hand for the next performance of *Knuckle*, Open Circle Theatre's latest presentation.

*Knuckle* roughly tells the story of Curley, a hardened cynical 'Bogey' type character who returns to his hometown after a 12 years absence to investigate the disappearance of his sister. Playwright David Hare seems to care less about the plot than in placing preliminary emphasis on getting his message across — that being that all people are basically rotten and dangerous, making "that tiny weed called morality" doomed to extinction. Hare makes sure that his audience grasps his meaning by having Curley paraphrase this message every time he opens his mechano-mouth.

Herein lies the 'special' touch of the play that makes the viewer dart open his eyes and exclaim, "I finally get it! Big deal". All the characters are made up in assorted shades of green and grey to appear slightly inhuman and robot-like. These contorted characters help to accentuate Hare's already obvious message that people seem to lack warmth and compassion, being no better than metal machinery.

Add to this set of Ziebarted people dialogue that does not fare quite as well against the passage of time. It is dull and cliché-ridden, serving to flog to death, a play that already



seems a dead horse.

One element of the script, however, is slightly redemptive. Curley's lines are always something special. His lightning responses and awesome analogies make the audience howl with laughter, one getting the impression that he is taking a lesson in insult school. Lines like, "That broad smelled like she dabbed a dash of dandel behind each ear", are clever and colourful.

Most of the characters play their parts competently. Steven Bush, playing Patrick, was often inaudible, however, tending to run through his lines rather than act them out.

The music is sleazy, acting to further the clichés of smoky bar rooms and foggy London waterfront scenes. The lighting was

crisply executed to accentuate the sometimes eerie atmosphere.

The set consists of a makeshift bar room and parlour, with a sheer, spiderweb-like backdrop through which characters moved, sometimes to no purpose. Not only is it uninspiring, but barely functional, one finding characters from a downtown bar clinking glasses with people in an uptown living room.

Altogether *Knuckle* could best be described as an old story with some new twists, most of which, unfortunately, serve to further disjoint the drama. But, for a first rate lesson in retorts and a chance to learn what the title has to do with the play, visit the Open Circle, they are sure to make you laugh one way or another.

## Playing peanut politics

A news media presentation by artists Vincent Trasov and John Mitchell, "The Rise and Fall of the Peanut Party," will recount some of the highlights of a 1974 Vancouver Mayorality contest at noon tomorrow in the Stong Theatre.

Tasov, running as "Mr. Peanut" long before Jimmy Carter came into international prominence, will recount with colour video tape and slides some of the highlights of the civic campaign in which he won 3,000 votes (4 per cent of the total) cast in competition with three other candidates.

On a cross-country tour, Trasov and Mitchell have slated stops in Ottawa, Montreal, New York and the Western Provinces.

Their newly published book, *The Rise and Fall of the Peanut Party - Journal: Twenty Days in November*, described as "a celebration of artful politics", documents the campaign experience with large-scale artwork.

Sponsored by Stong College, the media presentation is free and open to every one.