

Theatre Baraka hits the scene

by Mike Evans

He stands just off the stage in a pile of eclectic refuse — a chicken bone, styrofoam coffee cup, rolled hockey tape and pixie dust — this angular graduate of the University of Alberta, a prisoner of theatre. He is in constant, furtive motion, an exposed nerve vibrating in sympathetic resonance to the traditions of a theatre now largely gone but not forgotten. His name is Hafiz Karmali and one hour before the curtain rises on the opening night of Theatre Baraka's production of Federico Garcia Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* he is nervously awaiting the verdict of his spiritual forebears.

Theatre Baraka is the newest collective to animate the local theatre community and they promise a theatrical experience unlike any seen in this city in recent years, with sufficient credentials to lend credibility to their claim. Director Karmali, recipient of a BA in drama from the University of Alberta, has returned from a four year stint at Harvard and an apprenticeship with Andre Serbon of the American Repertory Theatre. The actors in the company, U of A grads all, include Raul Tome, Arne MacPherson, Davina Stewart, Sterling award winner Patricia Darbasie and Rebecca Starr. Little known to students on this campus is that the BFA (Acting) program at this university is recognized as one of the finest in North America, second in Canada, perhaps, only to the National Theatre School. In other words, this is a young company (the oldest, Karmali, is 28) of theatre professionals, committed to the stage as a laboratory for human experience.

At the same time however, Karmali defies scholasticism and the established conventions of naturalist theatre in the presentation of this play. Karmali says "I want to circumvent the intellect. For me, theatre should be instinctive, visceral. I want to astound the audience with an immediate sensual experience of light and sound, colour, music and movement, dance, acrobatics and pageantry." For him, the stage is a black canvas upon which he has the "obligation to

realize the play completely, in all its complexity, in all its elements," forcing the audience to confront the unexpected and marvel at the strange.

Lorca's play, in fact his entire oeuvre, presents an ideal opportunity for Karmali's experimentalism. Having evolved out of childhood explorations into puppetry and an adult commitment to the avant garde, Lorca's drama is based upon theatrical spectacle, on the capacity of human beings to feel awe, wonder, fear, and love. This play, *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife*, is a transitional piece in Lorca's career, bridging the gap between his early violent and surreal puppet plays and his mature ritualistic rural dramas. The hybrid exploits the best of both styles.

This play is not realistic in the slightest. In a fit of pique, for which he later apologized, Karmali called much of the more familiar, naturalistic theatre "anal" (by which he meant boring) and lamented its failure to appreciate the visual possibilities of drama. It is, after all, a medium which demands not a solitary reader but an audience, a performance. Within Karmali's aesthetic, the full resources of the theatre, lights, sound, music, design and props, are colleagues of the actors. The whole production must be choreographed meticulously to create a psychic and emotional tempest of poetic proportions, a balletic opera of the spoken word.

For this reason, the acting style is wildly different from what one would normally expect. Karmali says, paraphrasing Lorca, that the audience should have a sense of being "at a circus or a sporting event." His actors are required to be continually inventive, exploiting dance, music, gymnastics and acrobatics. Karmali says that the success of his work depends largely upon the commitment and originality of his actors. In this company he praises his fellow theatre practitioners saying "with the exception of one person who had to leave the company in mid-rehearsal, they have all worked very hard and have somewhat relieved my natural and persistent anxiety. I think Lorca would be pleased."

The Vinyl Phyle

The Beautiful South
Welcome to the Beautiful South
Go! Records/PolyGram

The Beautiful South are the first splinter group to emerge from the now defunct Housemartins. Vocalist Paul Heaton and drummer Dave Hemingway started collaborating soon after The Housemartins split, formed a new band, and *Welcome To The Beautiful South* is their debut release.

Comparisons with The Housemartins would be unfair, but I have to say one thing: someone once told me that he liked The Housemartins because they always sound so happy. Well, that's not really true. One of the great things about The Housemartins is how they managed to combine upbeat music with cynical and at times scathing lyrics — a clever disguise, as it were. With *Welcome To The Beautiful South*, Heaton and his new partner David Rotheray seem to have perfected that technique.

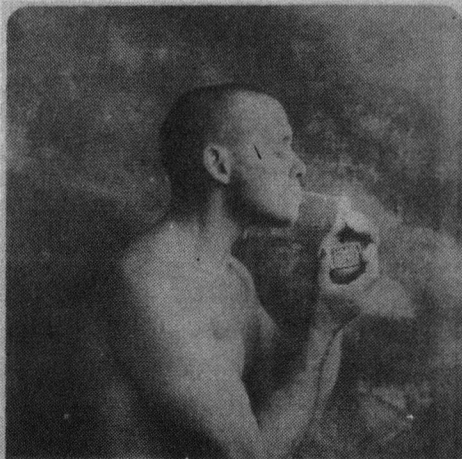
The opening track, "Song For Whoever," is marvellous. With a gentle piano melody it takes a fatal shot at the current crop of male songwriters who seem to use girls and emotional incidents as fodder for songs, without

really caring. ("Deep, so deep, the number one I hope to reap depends upon the tears you weep, so cry, lover, cry") After "Song For Whoever," there's.... well, there's.... I really wanted to be able to say a lot of good things about The Beautiful South, but I can't. Except for that first song and a couple of other tracks, *Welcome To The Beautiful South* makes elevator music sound like The Clash by comparison.

Granted, I usually spend most of my time listening to rather raucous tunes, but I can still appreciate softer music. But this album — my goodness, you don't even have to turn it down when your parents are around. Some songs you could play at "8" on your Walkman and no one on the bus would notice... you wouldn't either.

There are a couple of other highlights such as "From Under The Covers" and the amusing "I Love You (But You're Boring)" but overall, the album is quite a sleeper. Perhaps if you listened to it over and over it would eventually grow on you, but that nice music disguise thing that I talked about just doesn't work all the time. *Welcome To The Beautiful South* is a very good album, really... but it's just — dull.

- Michael Chevalier



THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

Calling All COFFEE LOVERS!



Cookies by George has just expanded its family of great taste.

Now try:


- Espresso
- Café Laté
- Cappuccino

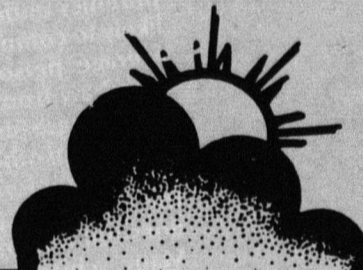
all at very competitive prices

Also, try our FLAVOURED COFFEES

We serve Almond, Chocolate-Mint, and Creme de Cacao flavoured coffees all EXCLUSIVE to Cookies by George

Clip this coupon for a great deal!

	Cappuccino & Cookie	\$1.50
	Cafe Late & Cookie	\$1.50
	Espresso & Cookie	\$1.25
	Flavoured Late or Cappuccino & Cookie	\$1.75



ROOM 250 S.U.B.
492-4266

Student Help

**ARE THINGS GETTING YOU DOWN?
DO YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO?**

Since 1969 Student Help has been a volunteer organization offering a quiet place for:

- PEER COUNSELLING
- CRISIS INTERVENTION
- INFORMATION and REFERRALS
- TUTORS and TYPISTS

Please phone or drop in.
Confidentiality Respected.

**Under the weather?
Tell us about it!**

WE CARE!

A U. OF A. SERVICE SPONSORED BY THE STUDENTS' UNION