

Beer and laughs

Lone Star
Nexus Theatre
through November 24

review by Anna Borowiecki

Doctors and poets have always prescribed laughter as a cure for melancholia. Nexus Theatre's current comedy *Lone Star*, is a recommended lunch time antidote for depression.

Playwright James McLure is a sharp observer of human nature who combines his powers of observation with a deep understanding of the absurd. He examines our sacred institutions, i.e. war and fidelity, mocks them and lays their absurdities in our laps.

McLure has salted the plot of *Lone Star* with simple, snappy comic dialogue. As the tenions of the play increase so does the laughter. But it is in the quiet moments of introspection that the playwright allows his characters to reveal themselves as more than stock comic figures.

As the lights rise, it's a Friday night in the back alley of a Texas bar. Under a starlit sky, three slightly inebriated characters loosen

their tongues, making several startling revelations.

Roy (Francis Damberger) is a loud-mouth, red-neck who feel thwarted by life. He is a Viet Nam veteran who has paid his dues and demands respect. "When you come back to a place, you want it to be like you remember, he reminisces in one of his quiet moments. But the town where he grew up has changed. His friends have left for greener pastures and his marriage has started to sour. *Lone Star* beer and dreams about the girls he seduced in the back seat of his 1959 pink convertible are all he has left.

Cletis (Myron Dearden), who is the object of Roy's hate, is a nervous young man who beat the draft and stayed home to run his daddy's store. He aspires to a political office, but at the present deperately envies the respect Roy receives from people. Unfortunately, Cletis will never obtain that respect because he refuses to accept responsibility for his actions and allows himself to be treated like a doormat.

Ray (Steve Hilton) is the bonding glue between the wimp and the jock. He listens to



Photo Tim Kubash

their revelations, comments on their actions and occasionally gives advice. Ray is a character with a child-like innocence, and with the naivete of a child he blurts quite a few home truths.

Under the skillful direction of Ben Henderson the trio of actors form a well balanced

cast with a strong visual as well as strong vocal impact. One leaves the theatre chuckling over the characters' antics but also caring about their future.

Lone Star is currently playing at Nexus Theatre until November 24.

For tickets and information call 429-3625.

Garbo Talks plenty loud enough

Garbo Talks
Garneau Theatre

a dialogue by Dean Bennett and Gilbert Bouchard

Gilbert: First the plot. The movie is about a mother and her son.

The son, Gilbert (played by Ron Silver), is a wimpy accountant. You know, the perpetual victim. His boss dumps on him, dogs urinate on his pant leg, and his wife (Carrie Fisher) is a displaced Jewish princess, who is constantly harping at her poor little "Gilly".

The mother, Estelle (Anne Bancroft), is almost the exact opposite. While her son is the total conservative spineless Yahoo, Estelle is the perpetual radical.

Estelle is unable to accept life's injustices. She fights back.

It doesn't matter what the injustice is; she's willing to go to jail over an unfair 64¢ hike in the price of lettuce.

Estelle is comfortable with a picket sign in her hand, and is only fulfilled when she's accomplished something, even if it's only a night in jail.

Dean: If Estelle has any chink in an otherwise hardrock exterior, it's a lifelong infatuation with the screen persona of reclusive Swedish actress, Greta Garbo.

Estelle has been enamored with Garbo since she first saw a Garbo film at age ten. Unfortunately, Estelle now sees her socially turbulent life drawing to an abrupt close, with the onset of a fatal brain tumor.

She has one final wish: to meet Garbo.

Gilbert's staid life style is turned upside down as he begins a three-month search that takes him from the upper East side of New York to Fire Island.

Gilbert: Right Dean. He goes bonkers trying to find Garbo.

He hires a down-and-out celebrity photographer, stalks her apartment, disguises himself as a delivery boy, but all to no avail.

He can't find Garbo.

On the lighter side, his shrewish wife, upset with his odyssey, dumps Gilbert, and heads back to mommy in LA while Gilbert finds solace with a spacy blond actress from his office named Jane (Catherine Hicks). Jane is a much more likeable woman, and stands



beside him when he finally pieces together the last few clues.

He finds Garbo.

Dean: Garbo is, however, more than a symbol in Gilbert's quest and Estelle's past.

She, or rather the pursuit of her, changes Gilbert's personality. The loss of his wife becomes secondary, his job too mundane.

The hunt for Garbo becomes all-consuming, and along the way he learns to appreciate the resilience of both his mother and the woman she admired. The values Estelle so long tried to instill in him now become ingrained: he remains undaunted despite numerous personally humiliating setbacks until Garbo comes to Estelle's deathbed.

Garbo, the person, finally completes a bridge of ideals that will forever link mother and son.

Gilbert: I agree. In his search for Garbo, Gilbert reaffirms the values that Estelle had taught him as a little boy: values that she chastises him at the beginning of the film for having misplaced.

Gilbert learns to stand up and stop taking kicks to the head. He learns to stop being a victim.

And Estelle changes too. She learns the exact opposite: she learns to accept.

Garbo is what Estelle strived to be. In the climactic deathbed conversation, we learn that Estelle had turned to Garbo for spiritual guidance: as a little girl in the Bronx with big feet, as a frightened new bride, and as a depressed divorcee. And in all those traumas

Garbo reassured Estelle; she gave Estelle a sense of what a woman could be, and the strength to change her life.

In her life, Estelle learns to change what can be changed, but on her deathbed she learns to accept what can't be changed.

Son and mother flip-flop in *Garbo Talks*. Both learn, and both change, but neither is belittled. Estelle becomes more of a wimp, while Gilbert learns to be more obnoxious, and both are better people for it.

Dean: The film then is essentially one of coming to terms with one's own assets and shortcomings.

Gilbert finally accepts the former, and Estelle the latter. Garbo is the middle ground, the mediator that allows both of them to meet before it is finally too late.

Gilbert: It is a sincere film, and in fact, that might be its down fall. Honest emotion is



usually the last thing Hollywood dishes out.

But *Garbo Talks* is an exception. It's a good, simple film - a must see.

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The Chinese Magic Review of Taiwan
SU Theatre
November 12

review by David Jordan

Magic is perhaps a fitting description, but it hardly covers all that onlookers were treated to Monday night at the SU Theatre. Acrobats, jugglers, clowns, and remarkable athletes kept the audience enthralled for nearly two hours.

If you like being scared, you would have loved the opening act, when a young man balanced four gleaming daggers on a plate directly above his head.

For humour, the dancing dragon-dog was

remarkably dog-like, right down to lifting his leg on the stage curtain.

The amazing strength and concentration involved in kung fu were demonstrated when one member of the troupe wrapped a half-inch iron bar around his neck.

Sprinkled throughout the acts were gravity-defying feats of balance, like arranging nine people on a single bicycle, or stacking chairs right up to the theatre's ceiling, then doing a handstand on top of the wobbling tower.

Travelling circuses are a dying art in North America, and it's too bad. Only a hundred or so kids were in attendance last night. The rest were probably glued to *Night Rider* and *Airwolf*.