

# Drama takes back seat to shlock

*But what is it doing on the stage?*

C. Fertile

It's astonishing that *Love in the Back Seat*, now playing at the Rice Theatre, ever got produced. Bill Hartley and Cliff Jones wrote the play. Remember *Hey, Marilyn* - that was by Jones. This play is billed as a "musical romp", but what it is is a boring, offensive peice of trivia that should never have seen the stage and that should be avoided. It's hard to believe that there aren't better plays waiting to be put on.

There is almost nothing about this play that isn't bad. It is impossible, however, really to criticize the actors; Don Goodspeed, Shane McPherson, Mary Trainor, and Colleen Winton; as they are given so little to work with. None have exceptional voices; in fact, some are barely adequate singers. Their acting abilities are impossible to judge. The characters in this play are less than one-dimensional; quite simply, they lack substance.

The first part of the play is centered in the fifties and revolves around the guys' attempts to bed or "back seat" the girls. The girls come off as complete idiots, the boys no better. It just isn't funny. The second part switches to the sixties, carrying the same characters into new moralities and lifestyles. Exit the six pack, enter the joint. Prim little Debbie of part one turns into a complete 'space-face'. Greasy, hopeless Ricky Richards turns into a radical, complete with ponytail and beads. The other couple, who managed to chase each other into the back seat in the fifties, and eventually got married, leave their "wife supporting law student husband" routine to head for Woodstock. Along the way they run into couple number one from high school. It could be interesting, but it isn't. Everything seems to hinge on sex, which isn't necessarily bad but with these blank characters the various stages only prolong the spectator's suffering.

After the sixties came — you guessed it — the "me generation" of the seventies. 'Space-face' has naturally turned into a disco queen; the radical is less hairy but still political — now a Greenpeacer; Bobby Roberts and Bumpers Butterworth (yes, really!) are now split up with Bobby wondering whether or not to come out of the closet (or if he's in it at all); and Bumpers or Betty Lou, as she now insists, is a liberated woman who delivers one of the few memorable lines of the play: "I don't know if I confusing being liberated with being a bitch." The four characters enter into a kind of group-hug-therapy business after running into each other again. The playwrights use this as an opportunity to take a shot at nearly everything trendy. Again, not a bad idea, but overdone. The car, of course, is still on stage and although only the fifties were really enamoured of it, the playwrights feel duty bound to try and justify its existence on stage.

What else? The costumes, particularly the sixties segment, are bad. Very, very tacky. The sixties "Bumpers" looks like something out of the twenties instead of the Mary Quant effect aimed for, and Bobby as the law school drop-out looks like a fifty-year old ad executive wrapped in polyester and gold chains.

The music is sometimes bearable, sometimes not. None of it is very interesting or original. There is one almost nice piece at the end, but by the time it comes, I was so anxious for the whole thing to be over I'm sure I'd lost all perspective.

It is unfortunate that so much time and effort, not to mention money (assistance provided by the du Maurier Council for the Performing Arts) were expended on this...er...play. It's embarrassing to think such Schlock is actually being produced and irritating to sit through it.

## This year's Webb

by Laurel Deedrick

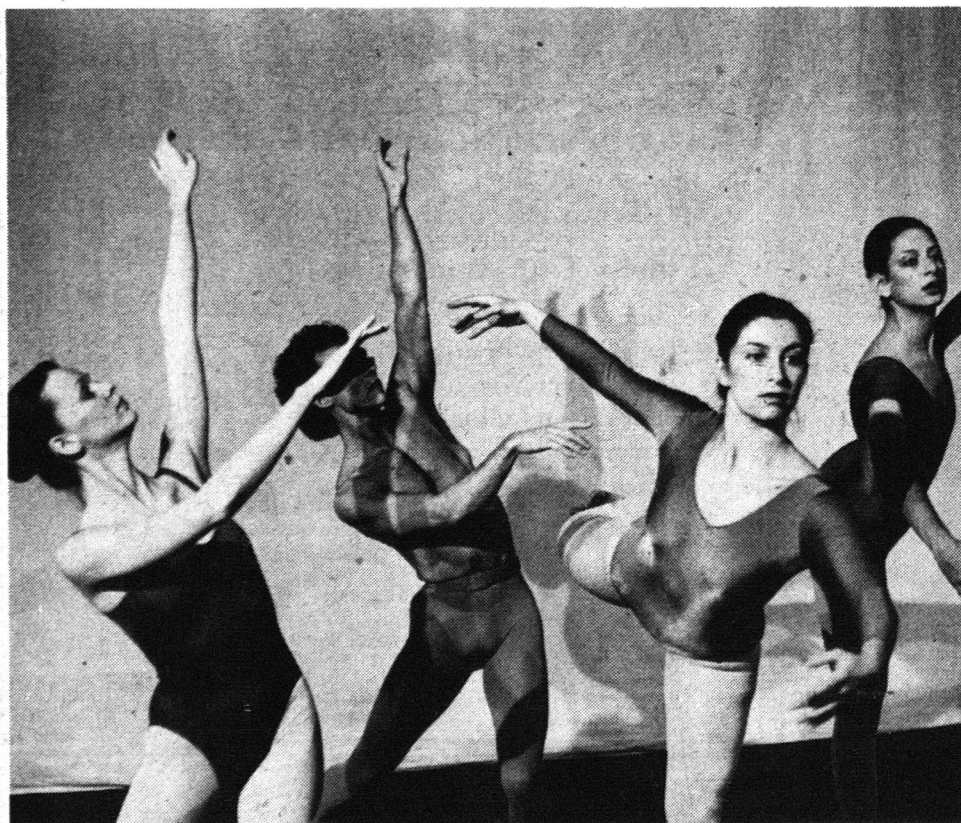
The Brian Webb Dance Company is back in full force this fall with an exciting new program. All of the works being presented are choreographed by the Artistic Director — Brian Webb.

This exceptional performer and his modern dance company will appear on November 26 and 27 at 8:00 p.m. at the SUB Theatre. His major fall concert includes three new pieces. These were inspired by a rejuvenating experience

that Brian had as a member of the National Choreographic Seminar this past summer.

The program contains such works as *White Water*, *Grey Sky* and *Home*. Brian Webb expands his artistic horizons to include original music by Alberta composers Bob Myers and Wendy Albrecht as well as Montreal composer Wolfgang Battenberg.

Tickets are available at ATO, HUB, Mike's and at the door.



The new and improved Brian Webb Dance Company showed its stuff at a rehearsal last Friday.

Tuesday, November 25, 1980.



Like the car without wheels, *Love in the Back Seat* goes nowhere fast.

## Inside Black Box

Friday evening was the opening of the Black Box Theatre Company, performing out of Victoria Composite High's Theatre Beside. Black Box is Edmonton's newest amateur theatre and is committed to creating the new and unusual in play production. Edmonton has long needed another amateur company besides Walterdale and Black Box provides additional opportunities for local novice actors, directors and playwrights.

One such novice playwright is nineteen year old university student, Vic Albert. His play, *Some of My Best Friends are Called "Dolph"* was the highlight of Friday's opening. (Only the ending of this cleverly written script requires some work to make the play produce more successfully.) "Dolph" is about the relationship between two roommates: Danny played by Tom Kennedy and Murray played by Michael Charrois.

Danny is forever bringing eccentric women home to his shared apartment and conveniently sending Murray out for the evening. It looks as though Danny has finally found a "normal" person when he

has an attractive blonde over for a visit. Appearances are deceiving when Lori, played much too sedately by Cathy Klushin, reveals herself as an aggressive Hitler-type character with plans to use her new found friend to help her take over the world. His winning a place in the "new order" depends on his performance in the bedroom. The events that follow combine to make a very unusual and wonderful little comedy.

Unfortunately, director Frank Burns and his actors didn't do justice to this skillfully written script. Performances lacked energy and lines were delivered with seemingly no thought to what was being said. Lori's transformation from a demure loner to an authoritative gun slinger was so subtle it practically went unnoticed. Although the production does have a few flaws, *Dolph* saw the Black Box Theatre Company off to a good start. With work, the play, especially its ending, should evolve into a highly polished piece of theatre.

The emergence of a new theatre company in Edmonton is a welcome surprise and I look forward to seeing more from the Black Box soon.