



Films such as *Manon of the Spring* are a coup for the Princess Theatre.

## Film

# Premieres at the Princess

interview by Elaine Ostry

I you regularly attend the Princess Theatre, looking at the latest Princess guide was probably a shock. Not often at this repertory theatre are there only four films in one month, as is the case this March.

Premieres such as *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, *September* and *Maurice* dominate the program for February, March and much of April. In the latter part of last year, premieres such as *Un Zoo la Nuit* were also important to the program.

These premieres have received a "tremendous response" so far, says Susan Morrow, manager of the Princess and mayor of Old Strathcona, citing the total of 4,000 viewers for *Sammy and Rosie*. They were chosen because "they were very well suited to the Princess."

Morrow does not believe that the running of premieres conflicts with the idea of the Princess as a repertory theatre. In fact, these films are important to the survival of the theatre.

"I can't run things consistently that people won't come out to see," Morrow explains. "I would like to play more Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, but (if) no one wants to see them, I lose several hundred dollars."

The problem is that while some classic films such as *Pride and Prejudice* are very popular, others like *Sweet Bird of Youth* are poorly attended. The latter film only drew 36 people. "I'm not going to give up on them," says Morrow, "but if I played these only, the Princess Theatre would have gone long ago."

"It's a balancing act between keeping artistically responsible and commercially viable. I don't want to get so commercial that I play *Police Academy 5*, but I don't want to be so esoteric that I only play obscure pictures."

To get the premieres, Morrow had to bid for them, "fighting against major chains". Cineplex-Odeon and Famous Players are formidable competitors. "I fear the influence that large corporations have," comments Morrow. "They can demand that the films be played in their theatres. I can't make any demands, I'm too small."

Princess Theatre fans need not fear that premieres will glut the Princess movie selection, taking away the chance to see *Casablanca* for the tenth time. The recent infusion of premieres was largely the result, says Morrow, that "I was able to bid on them all at once. It's unlikely that I'd ever find that many I'd be keen to play at once."

## Music

# Martha misses the mark

Martha Davis  
Poly  
Capitol Records

review by Randal Smathers

How good is your memory? If it's good enough to remember exactly how the last *Motels* album sounded, then you know exactly how this album sounds.

For whatever reasons — I just listen to the music. I don't follow the rock gossip — Martha Davis has split with the *Motels* and struck out on her own. Frequently such a split would signify that an artist is ready to try something new musically, but that isn't the case here.

"Tell It To The Moon" is the song that sounds the most like "Only The Lonely Can Play", the *Motels'* big hit of a few years ago. Not surprisingly, it is also the first song on the album. Might as well remind the listener where the lady is coming from.

Davis relies on her distinctive voice, comparable to Annie Lennox's, or Dalbello at her best, and smooth production to get her by. She rarely tries to stretch her range of expression, which makes me wonder if she's got much, and this cripples the album.

One notable exception is "Rebecca", in which Davis manages to edge her voice with darkness. Like this song, most of the album's lyric content is angry: vengeful songs about dead loves, dark secrets, and rage. However, on the rest of the record, the sound doesn't match the substance. For this the producer,

Richie Zito, deserves flogging.

It is surprising that style won such a convincing victory over substance when one considers that Davis wrote, or co-wrote, all but one song for the record. Oh well, at least she maimed her own material and not somebody else's.

The guest artists on the album really help on three of the songs. Charlie Sexton provides the only memorable guitar work on the album on "What Money Might Buy", a song about teenage prostitution and suicide. Unfortunately, the rest of the production on the song sounds more like Paul McCartney's "Silly Love Songs" than Lou Reed's "Street Hassle".

Kenny G plays sax on "Don't Ask Out Loud", and although it does not weaken the knees the way great sax work can, the instrument provides a nice counterpoint to Davis's throaty vocals.

The best sax player in the rock world today, Clarence Clemons, sanctifies "Just Like You" with some soul. Unlike most of his work for Springsteen, Clemons shows a lot of feel for his instrument, proving he can do more than the power runs that define his sound with the E Street Band. Too bad they spelled his name wrong in the liner notes twice.

All told, this is an album with two or three good songs, with the rest lost in the mix somewhere. It is reminiscent of the worst of the Eurythmics stuff — a good voice trying to escape the sonic wasteland created by a producer, a synthesizer, and a bad guitar player.



Martha sounded better with the *Motels*.

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