

Entertainment



Salt-Water Moon opens at Citadel

Taking a walk down memory lane

Salt-Water Moon
Citadel Theatre
til December 1

review by James MacDonald

I like David French, and I'll tell you why. I like him because he is a good playwright. I like him because he is a guy from a small town in Newfoundland who's made it big. But most of all, I like him because he writes plays like *Salt-Water Moon*.

Two of French's most successful plays to date are *Leaving Home* and *Of the Fields, Lately*, both dealing with heart-wrenching experiences of the Mercer family. The plays show the emotional battle between an embittered father, a lost son, and a loving wife and mother. Now French has written a "prequel", a portrayal of Jacob Mercer and his bride-to-be, Mary Snow, when they were teenagers. The year is 1926. The place, Coley's Point, Newfoundland (before Newfoundland joined Confederation, and when Newfies talked like Newfies). 18-year-old Jacob has just returned from a year in Toronto to find his old flame Mary sitting on the porch of her guardians' house, stargazing. Only now 17-year-old Mary is engaged to another man, and though she doesn't express it, still carries a torch for Jacob. And so, for an hour-and-a-half, Jacob alternately teases and tries to make up to Mary, and Mary leads Jacob on and scolds him for taking off on her. Ultimately, of course, they get back together.

Now if that sounds like a nice, not too emotional, quaint little play, that's exactly what it is. If it sounds slightly dull, it's that too. *Salt-Water Moon* works as a charming, slightly amusing love story; however, it also works especially well as a bit of Canadiana, and that's what's best about it.

Jacob and Mary are Newfie teenagers



photo Alex Miller

Salt-Water Moon: a history lesson and a love story combined

through and through. Both had fathers who fought in the Great War, Mary's father losing his life at the Somme, along with practically a whole regiment of Newfoundlanders. They both know the fishing industry well. But most of all, they are both intensely proud and ambitious, with big dreams and small fortunes. They are also in love. It is a bittersweet romance, both Mary and Jacob having been hardened somewhat already by the

unforgiving world. Jacob, by the servitude of his father to a lesser man; Mary, by the death of her father and her mother's loss of sanity. Thus neither will give away anything to the other, and they play games of courtship with one another.

Gina Wilkinson as Mary and Edward Leefe as Jacob are both outstanding, though Leefe's Newfie accent muddles some of his lines. Director William Fisher sets the stage of the courtship beautifully. There are also some fantastic exchanges of rapid-fire dialogue, which come across very well. The Maclab theatre is also a good space for this show. The set itself is pleasingly rustic.

Basically, this is French's play. There is no mounting tension to be created by director and cast, because there is none in the script. There is no dramatic highpoint for the same reason. The emotional trauma expressed in the other parts of the trilogy has been purposefully avoided here. French simply shows us the beginnings of these characters, giving them a background. He also paints a picture of small-town Newfoundland, 1926, and does it well. There are amusing jokes and stories about the town told, along with not so amusing ones about the war and the misery of Jacob's father. The economic and emotional hardships faced by the Mercers in their later lives are foreshadowed here, but French basically gives us a message of "love conquers all".

Salt-Water Moon fails, at least to me, on

one major point. This lies in the fact that Jacob and Mary seem too old and world-weary; there is too little innocence in their relationship. The lack of the quality of innocent and pure love detracts from the romanticism of the play. As such, the love present in this intriguing relationship is not adequately expressed, leaving this beautiful romantic love story somewhat lacking in its key point.

The other problem with the play is that it is too drawn out at points, and it is easy to lose focus. This is especially true in Jacob's recitations of the troubles of his father. Though the stories may be interesting to some, (for they were, at times, interesting), for the most part they just weren't engrossing enough to hold complete attention. This, however, can obviously be seen as a matter of opinion. If stories about the hardships of a Newfie fisherman pre-depression fascinates you, then you will probably love it. If they don't, then there still may be part of the play that interests you. If what I've related sounds like the most incredibly boring piece of drama you've ever heard of, go at your own risk.

Salt-Water Moon, despite its faults, is a lovely bit of Canadiana, and worth seeing for that aspect alone. It is a history lesson and a love story combined into one. While it is not particularly overpowering on either of these points, the overall effect is quite good. This is a "nice" play. As a walk down memory lane, the play should be highly enjoyable. And that is why I like David French.

A hit for The Cars fans

"Tonight She Comes"
The Cars Greatest Hits
Elektra

review by Blair Lowe

At first listen I didn't like "Tonight She Comes", The Cars' latest song found on the album *The Cars Greatest Hits*. It reminded me of one of those top 40 tryouts we get shoved down our throats every day. The song seemed only to consist of monotonous drip drop-type drumming by David Robinson, with a Randy Rhodes type guitar solo superimposed on top after the chorus. How original.

As I broke the surface, I realized that this song was not as blasé as I had previously thought. Upon listening to the song a few more times, I became rather fond of this "hit".

The opening consists of a subtle crescendo which grabs the listener and thrusts him into the song. Greg Hawkes then provides a melodic theme on synthesizer which travels along until Ric Ocasek, the lead singer, states his assurance that tonight she will indeed

come. As Ocasek's lyrics unfold on his favorite topic of girls, cars, and life in the fifties, Elliot Easton provides gentle brushstrokes of distorted guitar. This sound carries and heightens as Hawkes adds to it more melodic synthesizer.

One is then lead into a chorus which consists of triplet beats, which sounds like the introduction to "Modern Love" by David Bowie, topped by crisp, uplifting guitar, Sha Na Na type harmony, and Ocasek's tight voice which states, again with assurance, how "I know she's going to do it to me one more time" (He must know this girl pretty well).

After the chorus, my favorite solo (cough, cough) is gallantly executed. What guitarship!

The denouement consists of themes defined in the first part of the song ending with an ingeneous repetition of notes in their respective descending keys.

If you don't like The Cars' previous music, you probably won't like this song, but if you are any sort of Cars fan, I suggest that you give this song a listen. I really like it.



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