

Studio opens with faith and flesh

Although playwright John Murrell says he doesn't want people to be offended by his disclosure of an evangelist's intimate and private life, Studio Theatre's *Power in the Blood* reveals the hype, the hard sell, the dollar-conscious public relations that any evangelist would strive to conceal.

Power in the Blood is the story of Charity Shepherd, a powerful woman, faith healer who, due to pressures of her profession, succumbs to the pleasures of the flesh. The healing that takes place in this play is that of the return of Charity to her former hectic and machinelike existence after a brief and truthful investigation of the contradiction in her life.

The performance is of such a realistic bent that the audience actually feels they are a part of the play, or of a church congregation. At times Charity Shepherd, played by Janet Daverne, makes her audience want to come up on the stage and receive personal healing. Set design adds to this authenticity by clearly creating that Baptist feeling, complete with organ music and choir.

This the second time Studio Theatre has produced the Clifford E. Lee Drama Award winning play using a professional company, in order to add quality to the Studio's season. The realism with which the cast performs makes it easy to understand the humanity, the strengths, and the weaknesses of a powerful religious figure.

A few uncomfortable moments were caused by actors' butterflies and technical mishaps, but these minor occurrences will probably iron themselves out.

John Murrell claims that he doesn't want to make any broad

statement about religion. The topic of faith healing is certainly a part of this play, yet there is no definite bias for or against it.

Both entertaining and provocative, *Power in the Blood* has the potential to become an important piece of drama.

Jim Tanner

...and now in the flesh

Playwright John Murrell is living in residence on the University campus as part of the benefits accrued from winning the Clifford E. Lee Drama Award. His play *Power in the Blood* is now being performed at Studio Theatre in Corbett Hall.

Mr. Murrell gave The Gateway an interview while he was in Edmonton assisting with production.

GATEWAY: Why did you write this play, John?

"Well, I suppose that is really two questions. One is why do I write and the other why did I write a play about this topic."

GATEWAY: Why this play?

"I was raised in a fundamentalist church background, so I wanted to write about evangelism and fundamentalist approach to religion, but as I got into the play I found my character (Charity Shepherd) came to life. I would try to put things into my character but I found her so well developed that she would actually resist.

"I was raised in a Baptist Church. They have a tradition of healing by faith and of using the bible as the ultimate text."

GATEWAY: What were your research techniques?

"Well, as I have said, I was brought up in the church so a lot of research had been done already. Garner Ted Armstrong had a similar experience as outlined in the play, and it was kind of freaky because his experiences came after I had written the play."

GATEWAY: What sort of things do you like to write about?

"On the whole I find many of my plays are centered around or contain characters in unique positions of power; powerful people and the way they react and relate. In this particular play I didn't try to make any broad generalized statement about religion. This play is just a story about a woman.

"Maybe some people will be offended by some of the things in it but I think most people can go and enjoy the play and take it for what it is - a story about a woman."



GATEWAY: I noticed that this play was not really made for Canada but had a North American tinge to it. How do you feel about Canadian plays as such?

"I feel that sometimes there is too much emphasis on nationalistic plays instead of national plays. Artists should

not think about how to make a play Canadian as such, but rather, just by living and breathing and being a Canadian it makes the play Canadian."

GATEWAY: How do you feel about Studio Theatre's handling of the play?

"Well, the experience working with this cast was good ... and I learned a lot. There are a few things I don't like but generally the whole thing was really good."

As winner of the Clifford E. Lee Drama Award Mr. Murrell is the recipient of a prize of \$1,500 plus expenses. The Award is a playwriting competition and playwright-in-residence program administered by the Department of Drama.

Power In The Blood will run until September 28.

Jim Tanner

... HOT FLASHES ...

CINEMA

"The Longest Yard", with Burt Reynolds. SUB Theatre Sept. 25-27.

"Andrei Roblev", a Russian epic presented by the Edmonton Film Society. SUB Theatre Sept. 29.

"The Rebels" (Sept. 25) and "The Last Betrothal"; Canadian films from the Alberta Film Festival. Art Gallery Cinema.

"The Railrodder" (Sept. 27). Buster Keaton travels across Canada; and "The Making of a Live TV Show" (Sept. 27.) Central Library Theatre.

THEATRE

"Power in the Blood", a Studio Theatre production, runs until Sept. 28.

"Sherlock Holmes" continues at The Citadel until Oct. 18.

"Lifescenes" plays at Northern Light Theatre all week. "What's a Nice Country Like You Doing in a State Like This?" at Stage West.

MUSIC

"The Irish Rovers", Oct. 1 Jubilee Auditorium.

"Edgar Winter" Sept. 30. Kinsmen Fieldhouse.

"Introduction to Jazz and Blues", one of a series of free jazz and blues concerts, on Sept. 28, Central Library Theatre at 2:30 p.m.

"Humphrey and the Dumprucks" at The Hovel Sept. 26-28.

"Anna Chornadolska" in concert. Oct. 2. SUB Theatre.

OPERA AND BALLET

"Die Fledermaus", and Edmonton Opera Association production, playing Sept. 25, 27, 29, and Oct. 1, Jubilee Auditorium.

"National Ballet of Canada" Oct. 6 and 7, Jubilee Auditorium.

"The Alberta Ballet Company", Sept. 30-Oct. 4, Victoria Composite High.

Wave that Tidal goodbye

In the last two years the public has been bombarded with a series of movies designed firstly to thrill and secondly to entertain. *The Poseidon Adventure* was the turning point in the trend and we have been drowning in its wake ever since.

Tidal Wave is billed as "the ultimate in disaster" and indeed, it is a disaster. Lorne Greene is the only familiar name in the long list of credits. Nearly all of the cast and crew are Japanese, and the film was shot in Japan. (A very sloppy attempt is made at dubbing in English).

The movie begins with a long scientific monologue that would bore the most avid geography student. This explanation is included in order to make the plot seem more feasible, but it fails to arouse audience attention.

Throughout the movie, the plot advances very slowly. Too much time is spent on scientific discourses intended to inform the audience of what is occurring.

The plot itself is very sketchy and extremely difficult to follow, due to a lack of major characters and an overabundance of minor ones. Lorne Greene plays a small part in a brief portion that was obviously spliced in as an afterthought, to appeal to western audiences. His acting appears in vast contrast to that of the remainder of the cast, whose overdramatic pauses, facial expressions, and gestures afford constant though unintended comic relief. The large number of characters in the movie might be attributed to the fact that the actors could not provide in-

depth characterization.

The movie itself is used as a vehicle to demonstrate a seemingly endless string of special effects. The effects are spectacular at first, but soon grow tedious.

The musical score is a cheap attempt to trump up a tension-filled climax. No such climax occurs, however. The movie ends just when the scientists are on the verge of discovering a miracle that will stop the tidal wave, and just when the two lovers are about to find each other.

The skimpy plot, as unbelievable as it is, is completely nullified by the ending, which is

awkward and meaningless. It would seem that after the gamut of special effects had been run the producers felt no need to carry on with the film.

Experience was obviously the key factor lacking in *Tidal Wave*. The special effects were captivating and the scientific facts articulate, but the acting was so farcical and unnatural that it is impossible to identify with any of the characters.

Perhaps our society is so science oriented that we have lost all fear of science itself. It takes something beyond explanation to evoke in the modern movie-goer the terror he demands.

Jamie Stanley

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