

...MORE ENTERTAINMENT

Maclab is a gas for Stuart Hughes

interview by Gilbert Bouchard
and Dean Bennett

It was last Thursday that Stuart Hughes, currently starring as Tom Wingfield in the McLab production of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, arrived at his spartan dressing room deep within the concrete heart of Citadel's circuitous sub-strata and granted *The Gateway* this interview.

Gateway: Can you talk a little bit about your professional background?

Hughes: I went to school at York University. I spent four years there and I was fortunate right after that to get hired by the Shaw Festival Company. So I went up and performed in *Cyrano De Bergerac*. That was my first summer out of school.

Then I went back to Toronto. I was working at Toronto Free Theatre. I got a new play by somebody from the U of A — Paul Gross I believe. It was *The Dead of Winter*. So I was commuting back and forth from Shaw to Toronto. Through that I managed to get an agent and right after that I started getting work with CBC. I did three shows with them, and then it was time to go back to Shaw. So I went back and did *Cesar and Cleopatra* and then I did *Cyrano* again.

Last winter I had absolutely nothing to do so I went home and worked with my family for a while before heading back to Shaw. I went up and did four or five shows last year and then I came here.

Gateway: Was *The Glass Menagerie* a difficult play to interpret?

Hughes: It's such a beautifully written piece, you know, and we had two scripts to work from. One was the original. The other was the one they worked on Broadway. We sort of combined the two, picked up what was good in both. Difficult to interpret? The piece is very succinct, you know. So it kind of shows you the way to go in a lot of ways. Bill (director William Fisher) has been very good-reigning me and the three other actors in the right direction. Difficult to interpret? I don't think so just because the script gives you so much. It's so clear in so many ways.

Gateway: How is the McLab stage to work on?

Hughes: Fabulous. It's a gas. I love it. This is like a mini-Stratford, you know. It's a gas because they (the audience) are all around

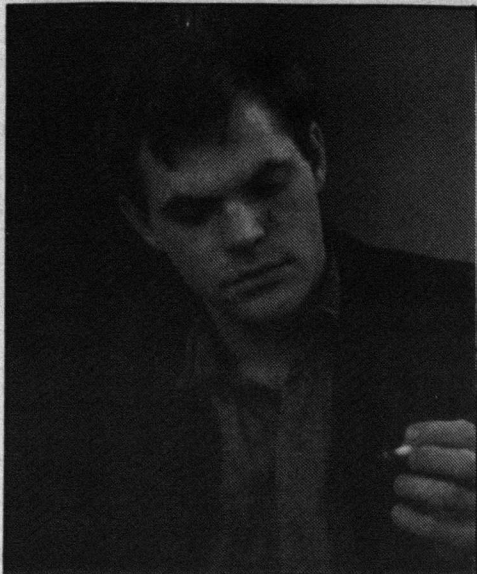


Photo Tim Hellum

you. You can almost touch them. It's not like a proscenium (stage) where you just work straight out (to the audience). It's more circular, you know, so I'm just having a gas. I'm finding new things and new ways of moving in that kind of space or environment. Last night, for example, while we were rehearsing, we found a "hole" on stage. When you hit the spot your voice just carries like mad. So you stand there and you can hear it bouncing off the back walls and coming back to your ear and then you step out and it's there no more. I'm looking forward to getting people in so we can start to feel the whole space a little more. It's great.

Gateway: Is the Shaw Theatre a good place for a young actor to start.

Hughes: The Shaw company knows how to work together. I learned a lot there my first two years but I'm glad to come out here and be totally separate from Shaw just because it gives me a different perspective. You learn your background there and then you come out to other places to test things. On the whole, it's been a very healthy experience.

Gateway: In another profession like, for example, being a writer, you are able to work alone. Is it frustrating for you as an actor knowing that you are dependant on other people?

Hughes: No, I don't think so. I sculpt quite a bit so I vent any individual passions that way.

Interaction with other people, though, is what theatre's all about. That's what makes it exciting — the interaction between people. It's an exciting field. No, I don't find it frustrating at all.

Gateway: How does Edmonton hold up to say Toronto or Ottawa as a theatre community?

Hughes: Well, it seems to me to be quite strong. Unfortunately, I haven't had a lot of opportunities to see many things. I've seen a couple of things at Phoenix and enjoyed them immensely, but it seems to me that all the theatres here are well backed or supported by the community. Everybody gets their fair share of audience. That's great. The more people they can get coming in for the theatre, the better for us as actors because that means there's more work. But it's good for the community as well. It's good if they can get a cross section of different types of theatre. The audience should look for more variety, too. I think sometimes what happens in communities is that they get one type of style like light or heavy drama. I think it's

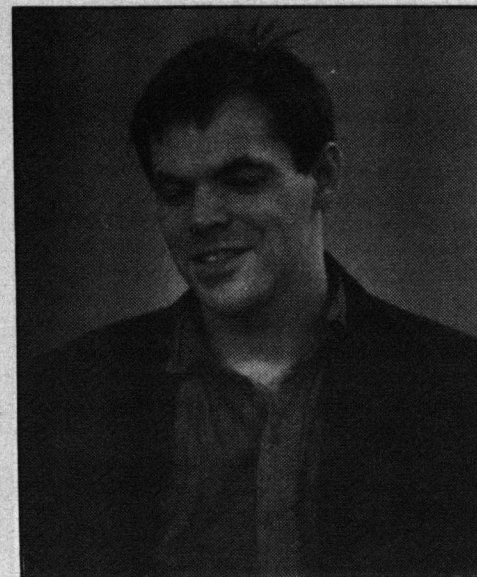


Photo Tim Hellum

good to keep a good flow of variety. Healthy for them and healthy for us actors too.

The Sure mistake

The Sure Thing
Embassy Films
Rialto Theatre

review by Gilbert Bouchard

Sure the acting is good and the script has lots of yuks, but any one who can't see past the slick trappings to the insulting premise of *The Sure Thing* is a fool.

Director Rob Reiner has to be commended for a technically adequate movie. The script is clean and genuinely funny and manages to have humorous incidents without blatant sex and bodily function jokes (give or take a few really bad burping gags).

Unfortunately, the flick's entertainment value doesn't excuse *The Sure Thing*'s other sins.

The film pits two ivy league freshmen against each other: the nice intellectual English major, Alison (Daphne Zuniga), and the supergoof hedonistic slob, Gib (John Cusack). Gib makes an unsuccessful pass at Alison early in the year and earns her undying contempt.

Later in the term, Gib's best friend fixes him up with a blonde knockout: the movie's "sure thing". So Gib has to go to California (where his friend is living) in a hurry so he can spend his holiday with this perfect blind date. He turns to the university ride exchange and, miracles of miracles, ends up sharing a transcontinental backseat with (gasp) Alison.

To make a long movie a short review, Gib manages to convince Alison that slovenliness

isn't so bad and by the end of the movie, she's letting her hair down and embracing anti-intellectualism with the best of them.

While the movie isn't blatantly chauvinistic and avoids the more traditional teen make-out excesses, the movie is still very condescending to women. For example, why must all women in college films be uptight English majors? Why can't they be engineers or aggie once in a while? I checked it out and not all of the 14,000 women enrolled in the U of A are enrolled in the honors English program, and not all the females in the honors English program are uptight.

Another annoying thing: while the two protagonists are at opposite ends of the spectrum — Gib the wild and crazy emotional type and Alison the intellectual — why is it that the woman has to capitulate? Wouldn't it make more sense for the two characters to meet somewhere in the middle of the human desire and behaviour spectrum?

Also, the stereotyping of both women and men in the movie is irritating. Why are all the women either uptight virginal types, or on the make, sleep-with-anything "sure things". Not that the men in the movie are any better. Either they're frat boys guzzling impossible amounts of beer or they're geeks who stay at home on Friday nights to do homework.

So what could have been an intelligent look at the teenage years stooped to stereotyping. If you have to see a film, and if you have to see a teen flick, you can still go to the Rialto — but see *The Breakfast Club* instead.

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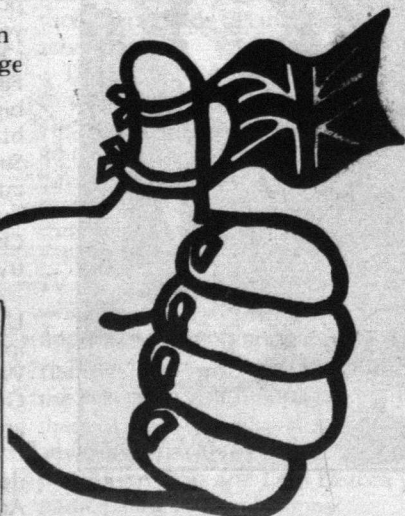
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