

# Five buck flicks are dignified but "it's also snob appeal"

By Hugh Westrup

Famous Players Theatres has concocted an effective scheme to boost the earnings of its ailing theatre in the Toronto Dominion Centre.

In the past the theatre has been, according to its new manager, Mike Bruger, "a failure". That is, until the introduction in September of "exclusive, pre-release, reserved seat engagements" for which moviegoers must pay an added \$1.25 over the regular admission price of \$3.75.

Bruger said the theatre now appeals to "an intellectually sophisticated audience who want a nice, dignified evening of entertainment similar to what one might find at the O'Keefe Centre."

"We're no longer talking about films, we're talking about entertainment of the quality which cannot be covered by a \$3.75 admission price."

Bruger said the advertising statement quoted above implies that one will be paying for better service,

a cleaner environment and the convenience of planning a night out, all of which contribute to the higher ticket price.

"It's an attempt to breathe elegance back into moviegoing," he said. "It's also snob appeal. Why do people buy a Cadillac when they can get the same thing out of a fixed-up Chevy?"

That each film is a pre-release engagement has little effect on the admission price. Film distributors are not demanding a higher percentage of the box office receipts from the TD cinema than they will from other theatres when the film goes into general release.

Bruger explained that the pre-release strategy is designed partly to heighten anticipation so that people will forsake \$5.00 now rather than wait for the film's general release.

No complaints have been received about the new policy, but Bruger would advise moviegoers upset about the higher admission price to "wait until the general release or improve themselves monetarily."

"If you don't have the money to pay, that's too damn bad. A five dollar admission price is a pinch because you haven't gone out and broken your back to earn enough money," he said.

Employees of the rival Odeon Theatres chain were reluctant to speak about the new policy. The only comment came from Frank Lawson of the company's head office, who said, "everything's worth a try. The nature of the game is to keep abreast of changing times."



# "Canadiens" shoots, scores

By B.J.R. Silberman

Hockey is no longer restricted solely to the arena. It has glided full force into the theatre in the form of a new Montreal play called *Les Canadiens*.

The play traces the history of the famous Québec hockey team beginning in the 1800's when hockey was first discovered. It shoots forward to the end of the century, into the first world war and then to WW II when Mackenzie King was in power and the famous "conscription if necessary, but not necessarily conscription" was cited. The play takes the Habs up to November 15, 1976.

Throughout the play the Toronto audience cheered as though they were at Maple Leaf Gardens. They stamped their feet in time with the music and nodded in amusement as famous hockey heroes such as Boom Boom Geoffrion, Howie Morenz and "The Rocket" appeared.

But the Toronto audience may not have had the same enthusiasm for the play as did the Montreal audiences. While *Les Canadiens* is about the hockey team, it is more importantly about the French-English problem.

At first the unsuspecting audience roared freely at the early scenes in

hockey history but by the time WW II was reached, the focus had become sharper.

As time progressed the audience was jolted even more until it was hit with an observation by a hockey player. He said, speaking of a friend, "... I told him, 'You can go to Vancouver or Toronto and feel at home there', but he says, 'I don't want to go to Vancouver or Toronto, I want to feel at home here' (Québec).

Further, playwright Rick Salutin, presented other serious problems in his humorous style. Many of the hockey players were English-Canadian. In one amusing scene, four of the players were in a classroom trying to learn French from a supply teacher.

The plot thus thickened until the end when during the game on November 15, 1976 the victory of the PQ's in the election was announced. It was then that the connection between the *Les Canadiens* team and the Québec crisis was tied crisply together.

After the game, a French woman, excited by the election results, entered in the most dramatic scene of the play. She said that the *Les Canadiens* no longer had to do the fighting for the people of Québec,

for the people themselves had at last stood up. A lone player asked, "but what of the future?" and the audience was left to ponder whether Québec would ultimately separate.

The stage was designed by Astrid Janson. It was a miniature arena, equipped with a score board and announcer's booth above the grid. The actors simulated skating by winding about on skate boards and roller skates.

The production was definitely first rate. Director George Luscombe did a fine job of making the script coherent and vibrant. Only the beginning scenes caused mild confusion since many people in the audience were taken by surprise at Salutin's energetic style.

While *Les Canadiens* was designed for a smaller theatre it was ironically almost too demanding for it. For one thing, it required a very extensive light plot and obviously more lights than the TWP Theatre could supply.

One final word - while the play was geared to the French point of view, it did not lose its excitement for the English audience. The Québec crisis is alive: it's happening right now, and the Toronto audience could not help but be acutely aware of this.



# New Canadian book slams whale slaughter

By Alan Fox

Tired of watching, helpless, as the annual senseless slaughter of whales takes place? Greg Gatenby has edited a book, *Whalesound*, designed to focus attention on the problem.

The book contains graphics and poems contributed by 86 leading Canadian artists. All have waived payment for their works, so profits from the sale of the books can go to the Greenpeace Foundation. Most of the works are original and were commissioned for this volume.

Gatenby says that over 5000 copies of *Whalesound* were sold in the first four days of the book's release. Since nearly a dollar a volume goes to Greenpeace, this represents a steadily increasing sum.

Gatenby says that he wasn't able to go stand in a rubber dingy on the Atlantic and put himself "in front of a harpoon". On the other hand,

he didn't want to shake his head and mutter "Tsk, Tsk, isn't that too bad".

He sent out enquiries to Canadian graphics artists and poets asking for contributions, while simultaneously approaching various publishing houses. The idea escalated, and finally culminated in the present volume.

Gatenby points out that artists in Canada feel very strongly about the whale slaughter. They are besieged annually by requests for free work by many charitable organizations, yet this is one of the few projects they have actually contributed to.

In addition, he states that some who couldn't contribute took the time to write letters explaining why, "and I understand this is a very rare thing".

*Whalesound* retails for \$5.95, and is produced by Dreadnought and J.J. Douglas Ltd.

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