

Entertainment



An Immortal Classic: A Christmas Carol

By: Connie Corbett

If Christmas exams are not enough to get you into the holiday spirit, try going to see Theatre New Brunswick's *A Christmas Carol*.

Michael Shamata, who also directed the 1990 TNB production of Charles Dickens's Christmas tale, was back as the director for the current production. "There is no better story in the world for reminding us what Christmas is all about," says Shamata of the immortal classic.

Douglas Campbell reprised his role as the skin flint Scrooge and John Dolan also returned as the ghosts. Campbell made a wonderful Scrooge. He played the greedy, penny pinching Scrooge with conviction, and the repentant Scrooge with a giddy and joyful spirit, guaranteed to put the biggest humbug into the Christmas mood. As the ghosts of Christmas past, present, future as well as Jacob Marley, Dolan wore the play's most colorful costumes. His presence as a ghost was felt through the play's interesting use of lighting, sound and fog (dry ice of course).

The Fezziwigs, who are the young Scrooge's employers, are played by Karen Kennedy and Stewart Arnott. This couple enlivens the play and makes the sometimes dreary life of Scrooge more pleasant.

The playhouse was packed for the Tuesday night showing with children, students, adults and seniors. Everyone seemed to enjoy the timeless classic, especially Tiny Tim's famous line, "God bless us, every one."

Most moving in the play was Scrooge's trip to the future. And there were a few wet eyes, when he realized that the path he had chosen could mean both his death and the death of Tiny Tim.

If you wish to get into the Christmas mood, *A Christmas Carol* is the play to see.



Holiday Survival Tips For The Prudent Student

Jingle bells, jingle bells we're all going away.

Back on down to the parents home, Oh gosh, oh no, all day?

Obbb.

Jingle bells, jingle bells holiday time is here.

So lets go out and have some fun with or without the beer. (HHHbbmmmm?)

Okay, so its not exactly Burl Ives, but truth to tell, this time of year can be quite nerve racking. Especially if you haven't lived at home for some time. Everyone so cheerful and polite; its enough to make the Pillsbury Doughboy's saccharine level go up. Anyway, for those of you who have not stayed within the domicile of our significant parental unit, here is a guide on how to survive during the holidays.

1) This is not the time to bring up any NEW and INTERESTING things about your life since you left home. Things that are guaranteed to give your parents a coronary. *Mom, Dad, say hello to my new boyfriend, Meat! He's a drag wrestler from Des Moines! (Thud, Thud) Mom? Dad?* Also, pregnancy is best left unsprung until after Christmas Dinner.

2) Don't go to the malls at the last minute! This is a complete and utter no-no. Unless you're into S&M, last minute shopping will absolutely kill any remaining brain cells

left over from the beer...Ummm..I mean exams.

Attention shoppers, could the young man waving the AK-47 and screaming "Where's the @!!!Gregorian Chant CD!!" please sto...AAAAHHHHHH (rattatatatatatatatatatat!!)*

3) Do not, I repeat, do not eat the fruitcake. If you ever wondered what your cafeteria meal really was, wake up and look at your fruitcake. Anything that keeps that long, probably has stories to tell. Do what everyone else does: Save it for next year's treat...Somebody elses.

4) Spice up that holiday gathering by putting in your favorite contemporary versions of classical holiday songs. Guaranteed to jump start your elder relatives' tickers, scare the living beejesus out of the family pets and wake up your dopey Uncle Ralph, songs such as "Grandma got Run Over by a Reindeer", and Metallica's version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" are an absolute must!

5) Horde all of that food that always seems to appear during the holidays. As poor, starving students, it is your right to freeze any leftovers and bring it back with you. Defend your delectables; that's why you're given those extra utensils at classy restaurants and

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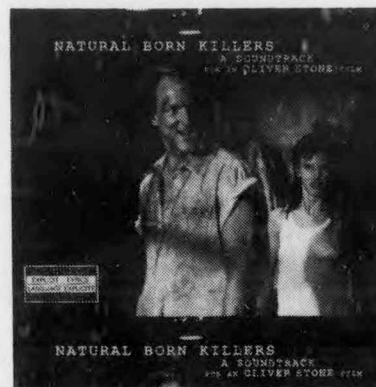
Unless you have been living in a cave for the past year or so, it has been very hard to ignore the fact that everything that Quentin Tarentino touches turns to gold. He is so fashionable, its fashionable not to like him. You get the idea. The difference is that in addition to being fashionable, he is also talented which is such a novelty these days. So it goes without saying that the soundtracks to his movies will be equally inspirational, doesn't it?

The soundtracks to *Pulp Fiction* and *Natural Born Killers* have more in common than being based on a Tarentino story. Both have dialogue from the movie intertwined through the songs; suddenly it becomes a lot harder to separate the music from the movie. Instead of the soundtrack just being a collection of songs, it is like a condensed form of the film itself - the two are inexplicably linked. A similar trick was used on the soundtrack to *Reservoir Dogs*, so why change a successful formula?

So what of the music itself? *Pulp Fiction* conveys the feeling of a trashy fifties paperback by using a whole bunch of music from the time when instrumental was king, and you didn't need to have words to have a hit. These are the kind of tunes that get right under your skin, and you will find yourself humming them for what seems like an eternity. Mission accomplished on that front. Then you get some rather tasty oldies; the sort that a particularly nasty radio station could be built around but still retain a certain amount of credibility - one of my own favourites 'Son Of A Preacher Man' by the divine Dusty Springfield is included. And then there are a couple of songs performed by some more recent artists; namely Maria McKee who performs an original torch song which will tug at anyone's heart strings, and Urge Overkill who take on Neil Diamond's 'Girl, You'll Be A Woman Soon' with an equal amount of success. But the thing that really saves this from being forgettable is the snippets of dialogue between the songs. Or in other words, the thing that makes the film *Pulp Fiction* so very special in the first place. Be it funny, witty, disturbing or just downright weird, it is the thing that makes this anthology of songs so appealing. A tip o' the hat to Quentin for his obvious talent.

Natural Born Killers is an even more ambitious project under the supervision of Mr. Nine Inch Nails himself, Trent Reznor. Rather than simply having the dialogue in the spaces between the songs, the whole thing blends together seamlessly into a miniature version of the

film. A version which is almost easier to take as it doesn't have the sensory overload approach that Oliver Stone seems so fond of. The soundtrack brings together a very diverse collection of artists



ranging from the atmospheric murmur of Leonard Cohen to the fearful wail of Diamanda Galas to the 'subtle' rap of Dr. Dre. And in a move of surprising nepotism, Nine Inch Nails appear no less than three times (not that I mind; Trent is rapidly heading towards godlike status in my mind anyway...) So there are quite a few shifts between mellow moments and ones that make you think that the end of the world is coming; nothing too clever



in that. But the thing that makes this soundtrack so compelling is that even in the most gentle songs (such as Cowboy Junkies' 'Sweet Jane') there is a feeling of impending doom; a feeling that hell could break loose at any time. Even Patsy Cline seems frightening. A scary album, particularly when combined with those visual images that the movie itself leaves in your head for days to come - don't plan on getting much sleep.

Another thing that can't have escaped your notice is that R.E.M. have come back after a two year hiatus with a new album, and things have changed. Gone are the tender, string arrangements. Gone are those 'pretty' songs from *Automatic For The People*. Instead we have *Monster*. We have loud guitars. We have no acoustic instruments at all. We have feedback. Feedback. What the hell is going on? One thing hasn't changed at all - the songs are still as engaging as ever (maybe even more

so...), but the amplifiers have been cranked up. Its as if they rerecorded *Murmur* but used electric guitars this time round; they have remembered how to rock. Peter Buck's guitar work is given centre stage, and it sounds more impressive than ever. The clarity of it all shines through, despite the blatant use of effects pedals on songs like 'Crush With Eyeliner' and 'Let Me In'.

Other songs find Michael Stipe being his usual cryptic self about sexuality, the rock lifestyle and further topics that the media find so interesting. This openness is no more obvious than when dealing with the premature deaths of two friends of the band, namely River Phoenix and Kurt Cobain. It feels like *Monster* is a cathartic exercise for R.E.M. - something to get out of their systems before they move on to their next project. It may not have the immediacy that some of their previous albums possessed, but that's no reason to relegate *Monster* to a lower division. It has a lot more depth than it may seem; repeated listens are recommended.

Song title of the week, if not the decade? Without a doubt, it has to be 'Sperm Meets Egg, So What?' by the oh-so-cute Heavenly on their third album *The Decline And Fall Of Heavenly*. Its hard to believe that they have made it to their third album in this relative obscurity that they exist in. The same obscurity that they used to have when they were Talullah Gosh; the world is such an unfair place. On this record, they aren't quite as angry as they were on the last couple of singles, but thanks to the addition of a nice horn section things seem a bit prettier. Yet a closer listen to the lyrics will let you know that the anger hasn't disappeared completely - its just they are being a bit more subtle about it. That sperm song I mentioned earlier, for example, talks about the joys of unexpected (and unwanted) pregnancy in a rather cynical way; all very jolly. Then there is the usual measure of unrequited and doomed love - a very wholesome way to spend 25 minutes. Once more, Heavenly come through with some wonderful old-fashioned pop music; the kind that you thought they didn't make any more and then when you find out that they still do then your faith in human nature is restored and you feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Do yourself a favour and pick this one up.

(*Heavenly can be found at either K Records, Box 7154, Olympia, Wash, 98507, USA or Sarab Records, Box 691, Bristol, BS99 1FG, ENGLAND. Send them my love.*)



during special occasions at home.

6) If you thought some of the people from university were weird, the holidays bring out all of the rejects from past Star Trek episodes to your homes. That's right, ladies and germs, those fun and wacky relatives that you haven't seen in years, are heading straight for your parents' house and they're ready to pounce on you.

MMyyyy just look how you've grown. (big fat, wet and sloppy kiss). So have you got some special girl in mind, hhhmmmmmm? (Wink, wink).

As a matter of fact Aunt Bea, my boyfriend, Joe, is here at the party. (stunned silence).

Well now isn't it nice that your cousin Babs had her baby last month?



6) No matter how tempting it sounds, try not to dare your drunk friends to lick the electric icicles when you know there's a short in one of them.

7) Remain tactful when buying presents for people. Grandma might not appreciate those glow-in-the-dark, edible underwear (then again, she might. See "How to tell if grandma's a substance abuser", Issue 11)