

"Brains Cleaned"

Over the past two years that I have attended this university I have been amazed at the poor quality of your theatrical reviews. Up until now, however, I have not complained, but in regards to your review on *Hot L Baltimore* I find it is now time to speak out.

I would like to say that I oppose almost all of Lawrence Wargrave's criticisms of the play and not without reason.

First of all, I think I should give Mr. Wargrave a badly needed definition of a theatrical review. A theatrical review should present a short resume of events within the play, followed by valid criticism on the acting and design. Only then should any other personal comments be made in regards to production quality within the bounds of reason and good taste.

I found Mr. Wargrave's review almost totally lacking all these requirements. Granted he did give some background information in regards to what the play is about, he followed with twice as much irrelevant criticism and comparison. He used too many catchy phrases (i.e. institutionalized meat loaf) with reference to Dr. Ballards animal foods. It seemed to me that rather than doing the review for its real purpose, he only wished to use it as a vehicle for his wit (more like witlessness).

The next thing I would like to ask Wargrave is what knowledge he has of characterization, playwriting, directing and the judging of plays?

Within the realm of characterization he used such phrases as, "fairly mundane theatre characters," and "good stereotypical mimics of" a number of characters. He did not support those criticisms with anything that would show he had some knowledge of acting. As for his comments on Wilson's script, he again showed his lack of knowledge in as far as playwriting goes by saying the script may have been responsible for supposedly bad characterizations by the Stage '75 actors. He also criticized the New York Drama Critic's Circle in an unduly sarcastic manner, with regard to their choice of *Hot L* as the best American play 1973 to 1974. What his rationale was for doing that, completely escapes me.

Wargrave has no business criticizing a group of people who know infinitely more about

theatre than himself. Finally his criticism of Frank Bueckert for choosing the play was so much ridiculousness that it does not even rate a rebuttal. Mr. Wargrave's review degenerated even further by comparing the blocking of the actors on stage to that of a football team on the field. Really what nonsense is that?

Now I do not wish to seem overly critical because he did say one intelligent thing in regards to design. But as if he was embarrassed at showing some intelligence, he followed it up immediately by saying that the set didn't fall down.

serious the play is. For *Hot L Baltimore's* chief concern is with man's profound need for faith in a world where faith is made nearly impossible by the constant eradication of the past and the increasing uncertainties of the future. From the Girl's wish to have the existence of spirits proven scientifically (the only proof a secular age will accept), to Paul's search for his grandfather, to Jackie's organic food faddism, to Suzy's dream of Real Love all are desperately seeking something permanent in a transient world. There is a pervasive use of religious symbolism throughout the play,

ful down-and-outers with a similar amount of explosive bravado, and powerfully delineate the need to believe in something, no matter how illusory, in order to face life. Is this a great, original thought? No, but most plays we return to are not rewarding for their original thoughts so much as for the fresh way they make us perceive old, essential truths within an imaginative, dramatically valid framework. This, it seems to us, *Hot L Baltimore* successfully does.

Alan Rutkowski
John W. Charles
Cameron Library

The "Lawrence is a Horse's Ass" Club Speaks Out

The last suggestion he made in regards to the play is that he should stand in front of Studio Theatre to tell people to clean their bird cages rather than going to see *Hot L*. My suggestion to him would be to move to Oliver Mental Institute and have his brains found and cleaned.

Craig Proulx
Drama Major

"Cute and witty"

It is perfectly understandable that Lawrence Wargrave missed the depth of *The Hot L Baltimore* and failed to appreciate the unusually strong production of Studio Theatre (*Gateway*, Wed., Feb. 19). After all, he was so preoccupied with how cute and witty he can be that he probably failed to pay much attention. But it is not understandable that a university the size of this one cannot supply more sophisticated and less sophomoric criticism for the pages of its student newspaper. Isn't there somewhere else Lawrence can receive the attention he craves?

The one thing Wargrave did notice is that the play attempts to be funny. But having misunderstood the humanistic comic spirit of Wilson's work in which the humour arises from the characters' personalities and not as a series of peripheral gags he has failed to notice how

which can be indicated by a few examples. The Girl's sudden obsession with Paul's grandfather is understood when we recall her love of trains and her concern that they are always late "these days," which is her proof that the world is no longer running right. When she learns that Paul's grandfather was an engineer, she conceives of him as an emblem of God, who, if found, could explain why things no longer work and perhaps make things work again. Thus her zealotry to locate through the hotel's records (tradition: the past) evidence, soon to be destroyed, that he was once really there. Another example is the person of Mr. Carter, who can be seen to represent the Old Morality (the Church), dogmatic ("I will hold this hotel responsible!") but feeble, and so laughed at or ignored. That Wilson has been able to write a play so entertaining and touching on the surface which is consistently thoughtful as well is a tribute to his increasing ability as a playwright. Of his six plays this is clearly his richest.

From Wargrave's allusion to Tennessee Williams, we assume *Camino Real* to be the other play he has observed. We congratulate him, but would point out that more apt comparisons are Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life*, and especially O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* plays in the same tradition which explore the death of the American dream among colour-

"Very short tongue"

Mr. Wargrave's submission, *Hot L Baltimore*, seemed to miss the whole point of the play, as it was presented. Of course it was a slice of life, as most plays are. The difference here lies in the fact that the realism was oozing from every line. Perhaps Mr. Wargrave has seen too much of life to find something like this on stage very exciting. Edmonton audiences have not been fed the same 'crap' from the same 'can', to paraphrase the critic. *Hot L Baltimore* is the first in a long while of honest, modern, realistic theatre. The fourth year drama students have proven their talents through the presentation of this play.

Mr. Bueckert did not choose on his own to "do a play that rehashes what Williams said twenty years ago", which I'm certain was said twenty years before that. It was more or less a departmental decision. I might add at this point that more than polite audience laughter was received the evening I attended the performance. As a matter of fact, the audience was ecstatic. In other words, the play was far from boring, it was alive!

Obviously Mr. Wargrave hasn't had much experience attending the theatre, or else he would have been more complimentary of the set and use of space in this production. Thank God, for his sake, he didn't try to turn away the Studio patrons, because if he had, he wouldn't have survived, they would have walked all over him.

On the positive angle, perhaps the pseudo-critic was using the ploy of reverse psychology, or else he may have been a bit sarcastic. If so, Mr. Wargrave has a very short tongue or a lot of cheek!

T. Davison

Berry wesGateway

* Jerry Lee Lewis did the same thing in Edmonton that he did in Vancouver last week - he bombed his concert. Consequently his name is mud here, which will reflect in album sales and even attendance at his next Edmonton tour, should he ever return. The saddest part about it is that Lewis isn't to blame, but Northwest Releasing is. They're the people who brought him into Canada, and they're the people responsible for the two shitty concerts to date. The front band didn't show, proper seating for the crowd and the press was non-existent, and Jerry Lee Lewis has a tarnished name for it. In memory of the Boogie Piano King, and in retaliation to being ripped-off by Northwest Releasing, try and

avoid the next show they bring to town. Who needs shoddy production companies?

* And then there's the guys on Fifth Henday. They are by far the earthiest people in Lister complex, and the most competitive too. Why just the other day they paid a \$150 fine for their latest contest, even before the winner was decided. Varying slightly from the usual log contests, the boys thought it'd be fun to see who could crap the longest log but they were raided by the official white angels before all the submissions were in (out?) (in and out, slowly, now with more passion, you're coming along fine).

At any rate, Fifth Henday no longer gives a shit. They made

an honest effort to get their shit together but got snaffled by the bureaucracy, who've planted wiretaps in all washrooms. Keep on grunting.

* This lion escaped from the zoo and before he was caught, he managed to get into a tavern and devour a bar maid. Upon returning, his trainer noted the lion was really high strung and examined him to discover why. After a few tests, the manager commented "it must have been that bar bitch you ate."

* Ski Poles. Ski Ukrainians. Ski Frenchmen. Ski Spaniards. Ski Germans. Ski Dutch. Telephone pole. Telephone Jew. Telephone Greek. Telephone American.



Gateway

Volume LXV, Number 42

February 26, 1975.

Published bi-weekly by the University of Alberta Students' Union, in the Gateway offices, Room 282, Students' Union Building.

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CIRCULATION

Circulation 18,000. The Gateway publishes on Tuesday and Thursday during the Fall and Winter Session. It is distributed to the students and to the academic and non-academic staff on campus.
Subscription rates: 54 issues, \$7.00
Circulation Manager: Jim Hagerty

PRODUCTION

Ad make-up, layout, and typesetting done by Student Media, University of Alberta, Room 238, Students' Union Building.
Production Mgr: Loreen Lennon
Typesetter: Margriet Tilroe-West

ADVERTISING

No mats accepted. National and local advertising \$2.28 per agate line.
Classified ad rate \$1.00 per issue. All classified ads must be prepaid.
Advertising Manager: Tom Wright
432-4241

FOOTNOTES

Publicizes campus events or those of interest to students, without charge. Footnotes forms available at the Gateway office and should be submitted before 2 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays.
Footnotes Editor: Cathy Zlatnik

LETTERS

Submit all letters, typed and double spaced to the Editor, who reserves the right to edit the copy. Regular copy deadlines apply. Editorial comments are the opinion of the writer, not necessarily that of The Gateway.

GRAPHICS

Submit all graphics and cartoons, by copy deadlines to:
Graphics Editor: Gary Kirk

COPY DEADLINES

Monday noon for the Tuesday edition. Wednesday noon for the Thursday edition.

TELEPHONES

Editor's office
432-5178
All departments
432-5168
432-5750
Student Media
432-3423

The Gateway is a member of the Intercollegiate Press and The Earth News Service.