

"...Think Stone Age..."
—Tom Clark—

David Eisener

Fear of failure



Gary Heirshorn

Elliott Lefko

About nine years ago a friend and I went to see the film, *Cabaret*. At the end, I got up to leave, but my buddy decided to see it again. It turned out that he saw the film five times that day. I suppose it was during one of Joel Grey's song and dance routines that David Eisener caught the acting bug. Today at 21, he is a professional actor with an impressive beginning in film, theatre, and television.

During the past month, Eisner who also accompanied me to York for a time, has been busy acting in John Huston's Toronto-filmed *Phobia*. Occupying an intimate shoebox of a dressing

room, Eisner wisecracked his way through an interview recently, continually dropping one-liners, perhaps as a front for his anxiety.

Like Guido Lefkowitz, the character he played for three years in the CBC's *King of Kensington*. Eisner is once again a young hood. Johnny Venuti is a punk rocker, a victim of a cruel father, who winds up in the slammer with a chip on his shoulder as big as his ego. *Phobia* concerns the efforts of a doctor to remove people's phobias. The doctor uses convicts like Johnny as guinea pigs for his experiments. The plot becomes tangled when one of the phobics is murdered and the doctor's life is put in danger.

Huston's direction is giving Eisner and the rest of the cast a chance to enjoy the challenge created by the unusual script.

"Some directors will ask you to do scenes according to a pre-established plan," says Eisner. "What I like about Mr. Huston is that he'll let you find your own way through a scene. It's very impromptu. A lot of things will change during a scene; a lot of lines will be cut and added according to how the actor feels. He'll give you a free reign until you really get cooking with the character. It really gives you a lot of confidence."

Eisner's career began with the Art Theatre Production Company in 1977, doing stage work. After finding an agent he began, while still in high school, to apply for commercials and television parts. His first break came in a battery commercial in which he mimed to another actor's voice-over. He later landed his first major role in *King of Kensington*.

With the confidence of 'Kensington,' Eisner began to seriously sell himself. First, there was an episode of *Search and Rescue*, then OECA's *Write On* and COPE, then a principal role in *Sidestreet* ("where I died after a truck ran over my midsection"). Next, he went to the U.S. for *The Littlest Hobo* and on to an American television film, *Yesterday*, playing with Vincent Van Patten (*Rock and Roll High School*) as army buddies

returning from Vietnam. His most recent projects included a television film for the CBC, *A Rosen By Any Other Name*, and Steven Stern's *Running*, playing a pivotal supporting role to Michael Douglas.

With his roles in *Rosen* and *Running*, Eisner has opened his acting sights. He enjoys comic roles but tries to strike a balance with dramatic parts. In between jobs, he takes workshops, constantly trying to increase his abilities with voice and dancing lessons.

Filming *Phobia*, Eisner has had a chance to talk with some other Canadian actors, including the talented Susan Hogan and veteran John Colicos. Recently, Colicos lashed out at the Canadian film industry, maintaining that all he was ever offered in Canada was "garbage." Eisner respects Colicos' views and suggest that Colicos' anger was an accumulation of twenty years of frustration. While it doesn't depress Eisner, he is certainly aware of the precarious life an actor must lead.

"Look, it's a tough lifestyle. And the security is not great. You've got to keep fighting to get roles. After an audition in which I fail to get the part I go home and say, 'Okay, what did I do wrong? How can I improve myself as an actor?' It's not enough to say, 'Oh the director is blind, he cannot see my talent.'"

As his career and the roles get bigger, the tryouts become more difficult. Not long ago, he wanted a part in Arthur Miller's *A View From The Bridge*, but the director, Eric Steiner, wouldn't

see him. "So I went out and read the play, researched the character of Rudolpho, an Italian immigrant, got voice coaching for the dialect, sprayed my hair blonde with this instant dye, and went in to see him. But I still didn't get it." The play bombed.

Although Eisner still lives with his parents and two sisters he hopes to change that soon. "I know it sounds corny, but I want to move out for my freedom and independence. My family has been really supportive of everything I've done. At first, they were skeptical about my acting ambitions, but once they saw the cheques come in they relaxed."

Acting is a consuming passion with the young man. A recent shooting schedule saw him wake at 4:30 a.m., drive 45 minutes to the set, work until 5 p.m., watch rushes (day's filming) for two hours, and get home by 8. The busy schedule leaves little time for a social life.

Admits Eisner: "It is difficult in that this is the first year I'm not going to school. Two years ago I went to York and last year I went part-time to U of T. Now I'm no longer with people my age."

With a knock on the door our interview ends, Eisner dons his black leather jacket, complete with Sex Pistols and Battered Wives buttons and begins to concentrate on his character's claustrophobia.

Suddenly the shoebox walls have become too intimate, and the oxygen is diminishing. Being alone with Johnny Venuti is like being alone with a switchblade.

Sex and more sex

Stuart Ross

The Illustrated Universe by Rikki, Aya Press, 1979, 51 pp., \$6.00.

The Procreative Habits of Vans, Pick-Ups and Macho Heavy-Duty Trucks, by Opal Louis Nations, Pirate Press (107 Valley Dr., London, England NW9), 1979, 22 pp., \$1.50.

A friend of mine, commenting on a novella I'd written recently, said yeah, he liked it, it was good for about one and a half hours. Which seems as good a way as any for judging erotic writing.

Rikki (yup—just Rikki, like Fabian, you know?) has already proven herself a pretty good surrealist poet and prose-poet. Her 1976 book, *Weird Sisters*, took in a large field of reference, inventing a fantastic world of sparkling distortion. The poems were diverse and a feeling of uncertainty about them, which made them all the more interesting.

Her newest collection, *The Illustrated Universe*, has much the same magic, but she seems to have narrowed her view, her

universe. With erotic literature the writer must be careful, because it's too easy to become ridiculous or laughable. Rikki's efforts to produce a complete set of poems exploring sex and sensuality, however, is fairly successful. Some of it is pretty bad ("...your cock is Master: the Freshest Loaf, the Newest Milk and the Sweetest—" from "Firmament"), and the whole thing is much too egocentric, but there are enough stunning pieces to make the collection worthwhile. Her work is full of mythical and anthropomorphic imagery. A sort of cross between Gwendolyn MacEwen and Guillaume Apollinaire.

An example of her often striking images is from the beautifully erotic "The Shrimp," in which the narrator, dressed in a pink kimono, waits at the door for her lover. When he arrives, they embrace and "then I felt the pressure of your two hands flat against my back and with a sharp, dry crack, the kimono split from neck to waist uncovering my

back. You put your palms against my skin and said, "You are shelled. Like a shrimp."

The book also contains a number of illustrations by Rikki, which are bland and don't illuminate the text at all. The failures in this book are a case of simple over-indulgence.

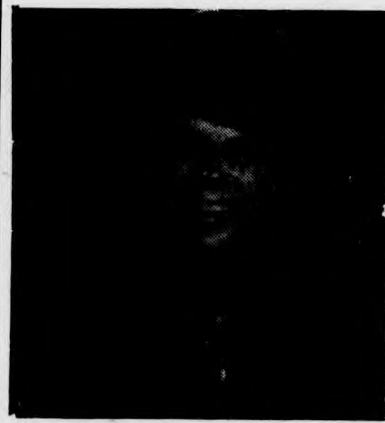
On a more intentionally humorous sexual note is Opal Louis Nations' penetrating study, *The Procreative Habits of Vans, Pick-Ups and Macho Heavy-Duty Trucks*. In his usual literate and organized manner Mr. Nations has produced a guidebook that will take a permanent spot on the reference shelf between *The Joy of Sex* and *The Complete Field Guide to Animal Tracks and Droppings*. He examines Fords, Chevies, Volkswagens and more. The detail is both informative and enticing: "...when a Transtar does finally corner an F100, a passive paint-work snuggle ensues followed by a mutual discovery of each other's ignition system." The reader learns, as well, that sex between many of these seemingly innocent highway vehicles can become quite sado-masochistic, what with slamming doors and bursting tires and all.

Also provided in each section of *The Procreative Habits* is indispensable information concerning vehicular pregnancy: "The impregnated Tradesman undergoes a 12-month gestation period during which time its side panels begin to show signs of undue rust."

Nations also illustrates his own work rather uniquely. A man to check out.

Read these books—and protect yourself well.

Off York



Music

Hold that razor blade. Put down that Talking Heads album. Pye Records (via Phonodisc) brings us uplifting new music from two great, but generally neglected, English singers. **George Melly sings Fats Waller—Ain't Misbehavin'** is a treat for both Melly and Waller fans. And for lovers of 30's jazz. There's the obvious: "Honeysuckle Rose," "The Joint is Jumpin'," and the title cut. But Melly also belts and croons the hilarious "Your Feet's Too Big," "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie," "My Very Good Friend, the Milkman," and a couple of rare Fats tunes, among others. If you've heard Melly, or read any of his books, you already know the guy's got class. He's not an imitator, but a first-rate interpreter.

Few people realize that Georgie ("The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde") Fame is still kickin'. His four nights at the Horseshoe in '78 were unforgettable. **Georgie Fame Right Now!** contains some really fine material, but also some stuff that comes dangerously close to middle-of-the-road (where ex-Animal and Fame cohort Alan Price was run over). But Georgie's sleek, acrobatic voice pulls it off. The range of genres is wide: calypso, pop, jazz, soul, ballads, and vocalese. **Right Now!** also includes the Fame classics "Zulu," "Ollie's Party," "Eros Hotel" ("Let's go up to the Eros Hotel and write some love songs on the sheets") and other charmers.

Melly and Fame have more style than a zoot suit, more hip than Mae West, and more cool than an Eskimo Pie. A must for manic depressives.

Stuart Ross

Poetry jam

Dr. Rat

The much-anticipated York Poetry Series has finally arrived! This regular series of poetry and prose readings will be held on alternating Tuesdays from 4 to 7 at Sylvester's Lounge in Stong College. Avec beer, as they say.

The gala kick-off will be this Tuesday (the 15th) with York writers Clark Blaise, Hedi Bouraoui, Frank Davey and Miriam Waddington doing their stuff. It promises to be an enjoyable evening.

Future readings will include a mixture of the prominent and the off-beat. There will also be open readings, in which virtually any jerk can try out his unsung masterpieces on an attentive (and partially corked) audience.

In an unrelated incident, author Mark Gordon (**The Kanner Aliyah**) will be reading on Jan. 17 at 5 in room 107, Stedman. This is a Groundhog Press/JSF-sponsored event. Gordon's book is a fictionalized account of a young man's experiences in Israel. Azoi.