

entertainment

Wherefore art thou, 'Julia'?

By Alan Fox

Fred Zinnemann's latest picture, *Julia*, is an evocative story of two women who find a common bond in their personal fortitude and ability to fight for what they believe in.

Jane Fonda, as Lillian Hellman, and Vanessa Redgrave, as Julia, create dynamic, believable characters.

Julia is one of the women who American author Lillian Hellman writes about in her autobiography, *Pentimento*. The story is naturally one of drama, set against a background of filthy rich, famous writers and the beginnings of the Second World War.

As children, Lillian and Julia grew very close. They travelled Europe, and Julia became Lillian's mentor and confidante. As they grew older, they became separated by other interests. Finally, Julia

becomes enmeshed in espionage in Vienna around the outbreak of WWII, and Lillian becomes enmeshed in the American theatrical scene.

Zinnemann, in his career, has directed films in many different genres, and worked in many different styles. However, all his work is characterized by high quality, especially in the performances of his actors.

In *Julia*, Zinnemann was faced with the challenge of material that covered a great range of territory, requiring a lot of social and political background. Zinnemann works around this by lifting his characters from the period of the film. The climate of Europe and America in the thirties is suggested by powerful images, rather than factually presented information. Con-

sequently, the film requires that the viewer be sensitive and open to the effect of the images, rather than waiting to have everything spelled out for him.

In addition, little is said by the characters. At least they say little to

reveal their true feelings. Often no more than a glance or a gesture is given to indicate how the characters feel about each other.

It is considered a critical *faux pas* to compare a film to another which is certain to be known to only a few

cinematic *cognoscentis*. However, I cannot resist the temptation to point out that Agnès Varda's *L'Une Chante, L'Autre Pas*, which played at the Festival of Festivals, makes an interesting comparison to *Julia*.



Vanessa Redgrave and Jane Fonda: The silence is deafening.

Multi-lingual babylon

By Alan Fox

Open Circle Theatre's production of *The Primary English Class* features a spirited, energetic cast that compensates for the somewhat stale script. The production closes Oct. 30, after an extraordinary (for Toronto Theatre companies) multi-month run.

The primary english class of the title is not for first graders, but is a night-school class for immigrant adults who speak only their mother tongues. Consequently, the action revolves around 5 people who not only do not speak English, but have different first languages as well and their teacher, who speaks *only* English.

The classroom, in which the play takes place, becomes quite a Babylon as six people are forced to communicate through sign language and their Italian, French, German, Chinese, Japanese English dictionaries. The audience is kept clued in by means of a translator.

The production's main flaw is the

script, or rather, the *genre* in which the script was written. I don't exactly know the name of the *genre*, but its current leading practitioner is Neil Simon. I guess you could describe it as middle-class farce, with stereotyping and implausible events being its core. Simon does it well (though not necessarily best), and Israel Horowitz who wrote *TPEC* does a good job of it too.

Unfortunately, good is not enough, as they say. Because of the elements of stereotyping and implausibility, it takes a really gifted writer to avoid the cliché and the stale. Horowitz does not quite succeed.

However, as is evident from the play's long run, *The Primary English Class* has great popular appeal. The audiences really enjoy the play, and find it hilarious. It is up to you to decide whether you'll agree with the enthusiastic masses or the jaded critic. One final word, though: to the audience nursed on Monty Python and Frank Zappa, this may be a whole new experience.



Battered wives: "Pre-pubescent dirty-joke lyrics..."

Punk goes to university

By Andy Payne

Punk Rock, it seems, is on its way to replacing Idi Amin as the media's new subject of horror and moral outrage.

In the past six months everyone from *Maclean's* to the *National Enquirer* have picked up on it, complete with commentaries on its sociological implications and neo-Nazi overtones. This barrage of sensationalism is bound to confuse anyone unfamiliar with this "new wave". Fortunately, those in attendance at the Tap 'N Keg last Wednesday had the opportunity to witness firsthand what punk is about, when Toronto's own "enfant terribles", the Vilettones, played Bethune.

The play was opened by the Battered Wives, a group of quasipunks who appear to be suffering from a severe sixties hangover. They sound more Picadilly Circus than punk, what with their rehashing of old Who and Yardbirds tunes. I fail to see what's "new wave" about redoing "Great Balls of Fire" complete with prepubescent dirty-joke lyrics like "You fuckin' bitch - You're full of shit - Let me fuck you like a lover should".

They ended their set with a tune called "Disco's Dead". I'm afraid their alternative was hardly more animated.

The Vilettones are without a doubt one of the most offensive bands to play the Toronto area in a long time. They are loud, stupid and obnoxious. I kind of like them.

It's refreshing to hear a rock and roll band be just that; a rock and roll band, devoid of synthesizers, artistic pretensions and stupid sixties pseudo-philosophy.

Whether they're doing their own "Dog Style", or a cover version of the MCS's "High School", they perform with an uncompromising integrity. The songs are short, the pace fast, and the show raw and intense. If Freddy Pompeii lacks the technical prowess of a John MacLaughlin, he also lacks the self-indulgence.

The Vilettones are a garbage band and they know it. They say "So what, we're having fun", and invite you to do the same. It is this very lack of slickness that is the band's

charm (Is it possible to call lead singer Nazi Dog charming?) They are no-talent, vacuous, zit-faced and proud of it. Nazi Dog's presence is an open invitation to all of us who have ever felt angry, ugly and frustrated. He is adolescent angst personified.

Somebody asked me that night if it didn't revolt me to see Nazi Dog cutting himself on stage. My answer: not half as much as it does to

see Mick Jagger wearing a designer suit.

These are sorry times for rock and roll; Lou is reduced to self-parody, Morrison is just a memory, and Iggy smiles on album covers. "My Generation" have either died before they got old or retired to become rich and complacent. In this day and age it is encouraging to see that someone is still alive and angry at the world.



Nazi Dog: Charming lead singer of the Vilettones