

*The
Stony
Brook*

PRESS

Vol. 9, No. 7 ● University Community's Feature Paper ● Dec. 11, 1987

Slow Death	page 3
Union Blues	page 5
Films	page 9
Comics	page 10
Plays	page 11
Dry Video	back page



Jorma— — page 2

HOMAGE

A wise man once said, "If you pour acid in the garden how can you expect it to grow?" Another wise man said, "If you plant ice you're gonna harvest wind." And yet another said, "Just rip it up by the roots, the whole thing sucks anyway."

Now what to do about Stony Brook? First, let's find the good things here and see what we can build from it. First and foremost Stony Brook gives its student a little bit of a psychological edge in the competitive outside world. It reinforces that you are really on your own, nobody cares for you, and that there are some people that will try to get away with as much as they possibly can without endangering their jobs. Whether we know it or not this will probably cushion the knocks that always come. No doubt, they'll be less severe and less inhumane than what we've come to know at Stony Brook but they'll be there and if you get through the worst, then everything else might seem a little easier to swallow.

Granted, people pull through it each semester, and each year a lot of people finally graduate. This is administration's ultimate validity: "If people are completing their educations and doing well when they leave here, we must be doing something right." But what about the quality of education and how accessible it is to students? What about the quality of life here and how much insult and insolence a person must put up with just to eat and sleep here? Is it completely up to the individual student to make the best of any situation, like it or leave it? Being self-motivated is a good thing but there is a point where a person will just say 'forget it, I feel used and abused and nothing is worth this.'

Stony Brook loses a lot of students that way. The idea of a college spirit seems alien here. A person should have some positive emotional bonds to a place they spend four years at and it should be more than an us-against-them comradeship between students. This attitude does exist, in a very big way. Days can be spent discussing why, but if you or somebody you know has been relocated for ridiculous reasons, live on a hall where the end-hall lounge is truly disgusting, failed a class not out of lack of knowledge but because some fool decided you were the one to be "weeded out", had your car towed because you couldn't find a parking spot,

got in trouble for drinking a beer, had something needing repair in your room and/or end-hall lounge neglected for long periods of time, have personal property thrown out by the University, not have furniture in your room because you don't want to eat industrial crap (or perhaps you just can't afford the \$700 at the beginning of the semester), been treated rudely and indifferently by any member of Stony Brook's faculty, or gotten headaches from breathing in toxic fumes at the Lecture Center, you know the feeling.

So now here's the question: Is drumming up these problems over and over again doing nothing but instilling these same bad feelings again, or is it needed to let people know that what's going on is happening to everyone? Should we just shrug our shoulders and slide through, stretching the good and forgetting about the bad?

The answer is given to us, signed, sealed and delivered, by the steady increase in severity of problems facing the school, the latest one being toxic air in the Health Science Center. That is a problem of catastrophic measures. You pay to come to school, you go to class, and then you pass out because of toxic fumes in the air. That is truly disturbing, but what is more disturbing is that it isn't all that shocking. The reason this exists is the same reason for watermains breaking and flooding the Union and a couple of dozen rooms, and it is just naturally getting worse and worse. And it will continue to get worse and worse until we experience a devastating disaster or there are some drastic changes in some fundamental attitudes with the people supposedly running the show. Take, for example, President Marburger's response to the new HSC's poison air. There was no way they had to avoid taking any blame and perhaps looking bad at all costs, so they'll ditch the issue until they find a way to make a statement that puts them in the best light possible. Some might say that's good business sense, and that's how they got to that position. But by taking that approach, they're belittling the fact that people were involved, hardships were created, and lives were tampered with. Instead of at the least offering condolences to people who had to breathe the air, and offer apologies that such a terrible thing could occur, they scurried away thinking, "Oh, no, how is this going to affect me?"

And that is undoubtedly the problem. People in charge have to start taking responsibilities for the lives they affect. It's been said over and over again, but when a person only cares about covering their ass and just getting through the day making as few waves as possible, they are usually very unresponsive to anything that isn't concerned directly with them. They satisfy instead of maximize. That's no way to cultivate the school anyone can be proud of, and if you're not proud of something, you tend to avoid getting involved with it.

You can get out of it what you put into it. That phrase goes both ways. It is usually said to students. Fortunately, it usually doesn't get worse than some bad grades or maybe a petition for readmittance. But our administration must realize that this phrase can also be directed at **them**, and their consequences are a lot more severe. The winds they harvest might be deadly.



Cover photo and Stray of the Week by Michael DePhillips

The Stony Brook Press

Executive Editor Michael DePhillips
Managing Editor Craig Goldsmith
Associate Editor Quinn Kaufman
Photo Editor Ed Bridges
Business Manager Kristin Rusin
Editor Emeritus Eliz Hampton

News and Feature: Joe Caponi, John Dunn, Josyf Hayda, Stephanie Long, Ryder Miller

Arts: Joe Castelli, Karin Falcone, John Gabriel, Alexandra Odulak, Mary Rafferty, Rob Rothenberg, Kyle Silfer

Graphics: Artemis, Marc Berry, Gwen Burda, Stephen Coyne, Jennifer Flatow, C.J. Morgan, Warren Stevens

The Stony Brook Press is published every Thursday during the academic year and summer session by The Stony Brook Press Inc., a student run and student funded not-for-profit corporation. Advertising policy does not necessarily reflect editorial policy. For more information on advertising call at 632-6451.

Staff meetings are held weekly in The Press offices on Monday nights at approximately 7:00 pm.

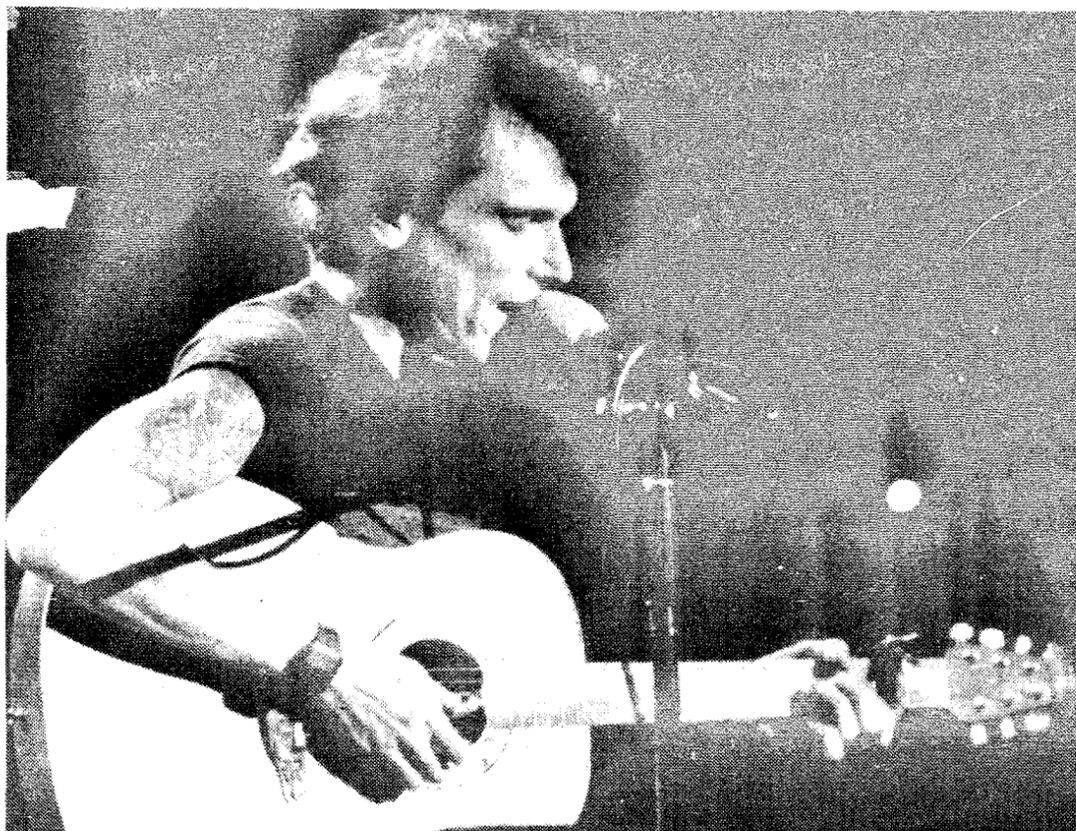
The opinions expressed in letters and viewpoints do not necessarily reflect those of our staff.

Phone: 632-6451

Office:

Suite 020 Central Hall (Old Biology)
S.U.N.Y. at Stony Brook
Stony Brook, NY 11794-2790

—Stray of the Week



'It's Not in Your Head, It's in the Air'

by Craig Goldsmith

Amid placards reading "Air Today Gone Tomorrow" and "It's Not in Your Head It's in the Air", the Coalition for Environmental Health and Safety held a rally in front of the University Hospital's main entrance Wednesday afternoon. The Coalition, was trying to draw attention to the fumes that have been present in the HSC for the past several years. The School of Social Welfare seems to be the most affected. Several students this semester passed out in class and were taken to the emergency room, said

loading bay. The School will be relocated to Duchess and Nassua Hall starting in January, said Oakes yesterday.

Students and faculty at the School of Social Welfare have been reporting ill-effects for during the past three years. After complaints mounted, the administration began moving the School's classes out of the HSC. Classes are now being held in various buildings as space permits, but there are no set alternatives, according to Ring. "It's ridiculous, one week the class is in Humanities, then it's in SBS. Half the

"You know, I'd get a headache and I'd get drowsy, but I thought it was just a dull class."

second year graduate student Michael Ring. "I thought it was the class at first," said Mr. Ring. "You know, I'd get a headache and I'd get drowsy, but I thought it was just a dull class."

The School of Social Welfare will "almost certainly be moved to the South Campus," said Dr. Howard Oakes, university vice-president for the HSC. Members of the Coalition For Environmental Health and Safety, as well as students and staff of the School, of have been pressuring the administration to take some action at the HSC, where students and faculty have been suffering the effects of fumes that enter the ventilation system from the Hospital's

time you don't know where your class is. My professor gave us the option of just taking our mid-term grades and not going to class anymore," said Ring.

Members of the Coalition met with President John Marburger and Dr. Howard Oakes, vice-president in charge of the HSC, at 9:30am Wednesday to discuss the problem. Marburger was to make a decision by five Wednesday afternoon as to what action would be taken to alleviate the problem. Dr. Marburger left for Washington D.C. shortly after the meeting, and according to Marburger's secretary, had asked Dr. Oakes to hand out the decision to the Coalition. At

continued on page 5



Vice-president Howard Oakes.

Sewage From the Frying Pan into the Gutter

by Ryder Miller

If you were responsible to manage and dispose sewage, and your country produced 640 million Megagrams of it every year, what would you do? Would you move to another country? Would you get another job? Would you cut corners?

The above figure is the amount of sewage produced in the United States; 80% of it being liquid. Sewage comes from both municipal and industrial sources; containing biodegradables, fine particles, complex chemicals, etc...The options available for disposing this material all have disadvantages: incineration requires high energy input; off shore dumping results in pollution; there is a scarcity of suitable landfill sites; and potential pollution problems are associated with the use of chemically contaminated soil.

In the forties research was aimed at perfecting mechanical methods of sewage disposal. At the time sewage treatment systems were designed for purification, aeration, and removal of biodegradables and fine particles. If sewage is not aerated, it deoxygenates the water where released, killing local life. If sewage is not filtered of fine particles, the plant life and the river bottom at the disposal site will be covered with silt. The two new methods of the day were activated sludge and the trickling bed filter.

The trickling bed filter is a biological part of a sewage management system. Sewage gets filtered of fine stony material, vegetable pieces, paper, fine particles, etc., before it was allowed into trickling bed. The trickling bed is open to the sky and consists

of a matrix of either large or small rocks, i.e., rock or gravel. Bacteria, fungi, insect larvae, etc., live in the matrix and degrade live material and remove nutrients from the sewage. When small rocks are used, there is more area for biological treatment which took place on the matrix in the filtering bed takes place in the bubbles. Sediment and filtering tanks are used to remove small and large particles out of the sewage.

In the sixties it was realized that there was more in sewage than just biodegradable

organics and suspended particles. Among the chemicals identified in sewage were chlorinated compounds, such as solvents, pesticides, PCBs, flame retardants, petroleum hydrocarbons, etc.

When trying to find a method to dispose municipal and industrial wastes with 'zero discharge' into the country's waterways, the process of land treatment was adapted. Land treatment is defined as the controlled application of waste onto the land surface to achieve a specified degree of treatment

through natural, physical, chemical, and biological processes within the plant-soil-water matrix. Design parameters can be established to protect disposal sites.

Application of uncontaminated sewage sludge to agricultural systems is viewed as a practical and economic solution to the disposal problem. Use of sewage on agricultural land has been shown to stabilize soils and increase plant growth.

However, sewage from municipalities with industries may be dangerous to use for farm irrigation. A recent study by Pimental and Culliney, two professors from Cornell, showed that arthropods living on collards planted in soil treated by sewage, showed reduced viability when the soil contained high levels of chemical toxicants. These were short term studies and the sewage used contained the 2nd highest cadmium level, and 3rd highest PCB level in a sewage survey around the nation. It's nothing new to show that dumping of dangerous chemicals onto soil will have a harmful effect on the life which grows there. A more important question is: What will be the long term ecological effects of continually dumping sewage which contains low quantities of chemical contaminants onto terrestrial and agricultural systems.

The people responsible for managing sewage have a lot of shit to take care of. Their decisions are pressured by practical and economic concerns. If they are not watched carefully, they may someday use the wrong kind of sewage to irrigate some farmer's cornfield, and the lower viability shown in the arthropods, may be shown in human populations.



Committee on Cinematic Arts

● PRESENTS ●

Arnold Schwarzenegger
in

PREDATOR

on Friday December 11th at 7, 9:30, and 12
and Sunday December 13th at 8 and 10

in the Union Auditorium

buy tickets in advance at the Union Box Office
tickets also available at door

oh, and join the press

I got dem Union blues baby

by Greg Recco

To call the Student Union the Student Union is something of a contradiction. Apparently it is not for the students. Over the past two years, you cannot help but notice the unchecked commercialization that has infected this one-time haven. This disease should be stamped out with little reservation. It is not my intent to banish small businesses to the bankruptcy ledgers of history. The row of tables near the front entrance of the Union are occasionally peppered with people trying to sell their wares. This is not the evil of which I speak.

Early this semester, I walked from my morning class to the union for a cup of tea and a muffin. But my appetite vanished as I approached. I saw a brand new car (Pontiac?) parked on the triangle of asphalt in front of the chemistry building. It was surrounded by a large group of students. I noticed, in passing, that it hadn't been decorated with a parking ticket. Hmmm...

Inside the Union, a tremendous cacophony directed my attention towards the Fireside Lounge (a place where students can relax, smoke, study, etc), where a scene of my worst VHF nightmare was taking place. The room had become a veritable movie set. As I entered in horror, one of the employees of whatever tremendous corporation had staged this display, pointed directly at me and proclaimed "MTV wants YOU!" In my shock of sensory bombardment, I didn't realize how unlikely this statement was, and was completely gripped with terror. The exaggeration of my reaction is not so far-fetched, it would be more accurate to say that I was consumed with disgust. I felt previously that MTV posed no threat to me personally, but here they were, trying to persuade me to buy into their world.

The disgust I experienced was mainly due to the realization that I had come out of this experience. The school had sold our space for the purpose of making decadent consumers out of students. Fortunately, this...this...oh,

well...this MTV Travelling Circus from Hell continued on its circuit without leaving much behind but a bad taste in the mouth.

But Tuesday evening, I was told that I could not sit in my beloved lounge. I inquired as to the reason for my unexpected eviction and found that this space was to be reserved for the next two days.

It was rather sickening to see shopping malls decorated for Christmas on the first of November, but to have space sold out from under our collective noses is going too far. The commercialization of Christmas can be avoided by doing one's shopping early (very early), but there is no avoiding the Union for a commuter like myself. I'd like to pose one question to those who have sold out to the Yuppie ideals of cost-effectiveness and "agressive" business tactics— Who is this building for? If it is not for students, so be it. However, you shouldn't call it the Student Union.

SLOW DEATH

continued from page 3

four Wednesday afternoon, Dr. Oakes secretary said that he had left for the day. A spokesman for the Coalition said that they had not received any word from either Dr. Marburger's or Dr. Oakes' offices that day.

The School of Social Welfare is comprised of about 40 faculty members and about 300 students, making it one of the largest graduate departments at the University. Joyce Leo, a first year student at the school, speaking at the rally said that "We came to this University for an education. We found that the educational environment is totally dysfunctional." An alumni of the school, Fred Pickering '85, said that one student died of an asthma attack during class that year. "I knew him as an undergraduate in Old Westbury and he never had asthma. I never really gave it a second thought, but now I wonder," said Pickering.

Clayton Associates, an outside testing firm, is slated to begin testing the air at the HSC at the end of December for possible toxicity, according to Oakes. He said that "work of some unknown type" will be undertaken in order to "make the place habitable"

Ridiculous answers to stupid questions echoing throughout academia's hallways bouncing around empty heads you know wisdom can be learned from the simplest of things—a rose, a sunset, or a pitcher of beer, or just a single breath in the cool air of winter, or a full moon, or a clown, or Zippy, or a song, or a cigarette, or a smile, or a girl.

—Photo Box

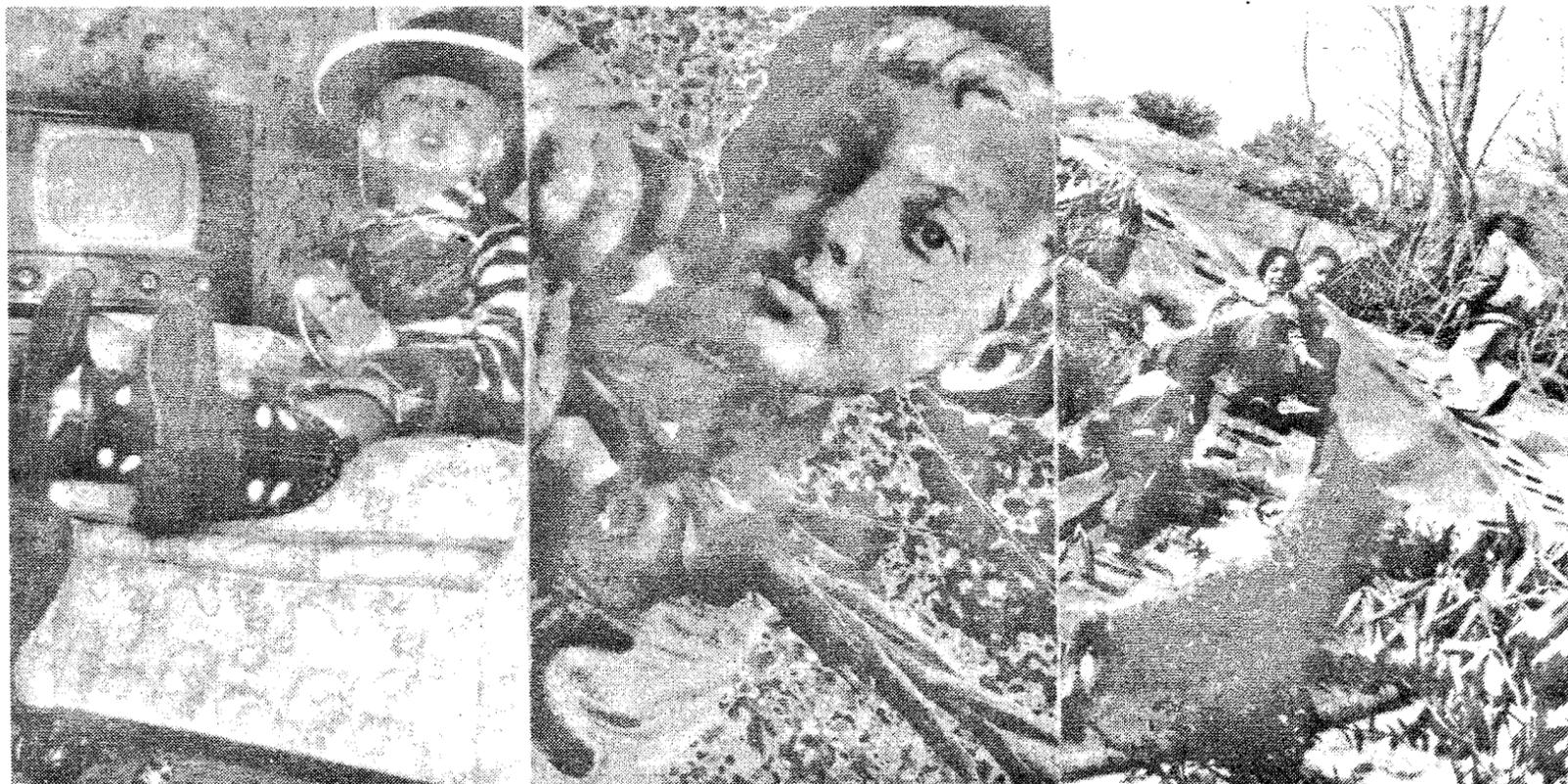


photo by Ed Bridges

**Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!**



**From the
Science Fiction
Forum**

**Christmas party
December 15th
at 8pm in
Central Hall 037**

ASIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Sweat-shirt Sale

**December 14, 15
Monday- Tuesday
11-4**

in the Student Union Lobby

Great Christmas Gift!!



photo by Greta Guarton

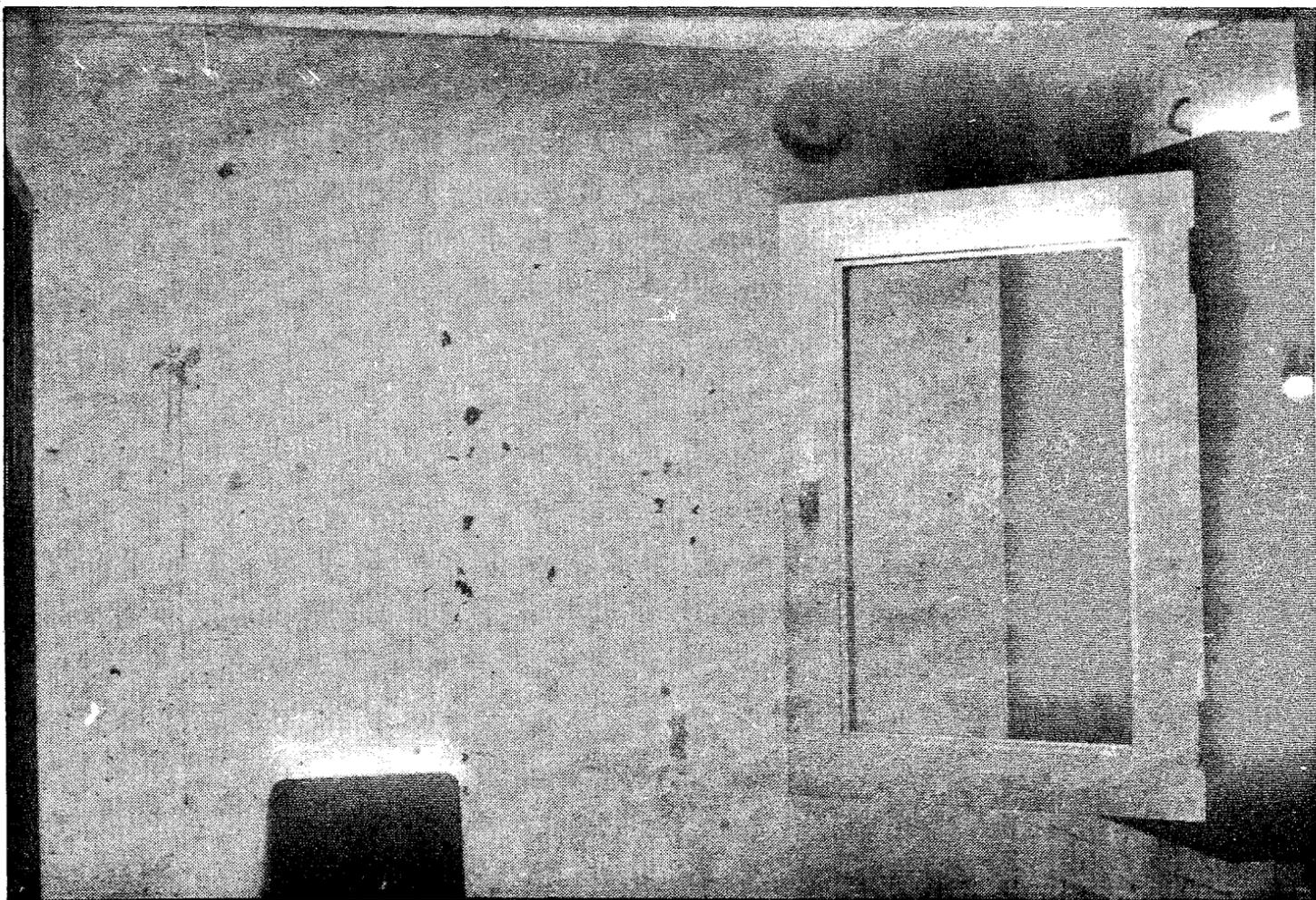


photo by Greta Guarton

—and then there's the press—

by John Labusohr

I felt concerned after reading the article in the last edition of *The Philosophy Club Journal* by Steve Loren, entitled "Communication", and, through my subjective concern, that article has propelled me to this page; it is not out of need to express my concern, but out of want to communicate that concern (through my expression) that I sit here now in these words.

There is a subtle distinction, I think, between communication and expression, one which I do not think is clearly enough separated in Mead's perception of world objects, which are the hierarchical worlds that become constituted in and through communicators in the growth of each particular world object. In Mead's system, world objects are constituted in and through the communicators particular to the world object that is being constituted; the system is multiple in that each individual could conceivably be in contact with many sub-worlds of communication, each with its own subtle variations of semantical usage of words, those differences being precisely the unique characteristic which distinguish the sub-worlds from one another. I have several major objections to Mead's system; these objections are not only in the paradoxical end point of his semantics, in which there is essentially no such thing as communication as distinct from expression, but also in the psycho-logic of the semantics; finally, there are major problematics in his methodology. I do not want to backtrack too deeply into resetting Mead's framework as it was put forth by Mr Loren, and hope that memory of his article is brought by us both to this page here; and I acknowledge my own ignorance of Mead's work, and therefore warn the audience that I rely solely on Mr Loren's article for both my apprehension of Mead's conception and therefore my subjective response to it.

The semantical problems in Mead's system, aside from the lack of discrimination between expressive and communicative use of language, a problem that will become more apparent as my arguments become more visible, are at least threefold. The first is that the perception of each sub-world that is created through the participants (communicators in and through which it is constituted) as an object is a psycho-semantical error which sets persons apart and detached from those very same worlds that individuals live in. This psycho-semantical error could conceivably lead into psychological dissociation, which would certainly diminish, not enhance, the social desire to communicate in the creative discourse that Mead has postulated as the means in and through which his end, that is, "better societies", might be realized.

The second problem in the semantics are also in the psycho-logic of them, and is a problem that I hinted at in my above paragraph. Specifically, Mead condemns the "means-ends" rationality (which Mr Loren sees as the most debilitating possible consequence of the striving in technological society for productivity and efficiency); yet Mead's primary concern, according to Mr Loren's article, is to more fully realize our abilities toward a utopian communication system: Mead's means are "creative discourse"; his goal is utopia. Thus, there is, in his own system, a means-end rationality, one which he has split off from himself and projected onto others [for example, those who "go pre-med" (the means) in order to make money (the ends)]. The projection of this rationality and this goal orientation onto pre-med students is not only dangerous in that by doing so Mead would be box-

PRINTED PHILOSOPHY

The Journal of the Undergraduate Philosophy Club

Know Thyself — Socrates, 460 B.C.

ing individuals into boxes, denying them their dynamical natures, (thereby diminishing, not enhancing our abilities and motivations to want to communicate), it is also a clinically depressed point of view, (in fact, bordering on psychotic depression, since what is connoted would be severe mistrust of the medical community at large). Though I do not pretend naivete, and acknowledge that this mistrust might in fact be well founded, Mead's point of view is one which I, for one, would not want to buy into. By doing so I would be denying the possibility for the reasons for the medical communities' existence to change. I like to think that the same person in the medical community who would do so for the money, in Mead's system, would eventually realize that money does not buy happiness, at which point the reasons for having "gone pre-med", for example, would change.

Thus, in Mead's system, the splitting off of these components, (the dynamical part of persons at a general level and his own "means-ends rationality" at another), a splitting that is clearly inherited within his system yet denied by him and projected outward onto others, this would lead into severe paranoid projection. [In Mead's dominant sub-world, that is, the world of communication, he aims at productivity (the creative discourse in and through which we create sub-worlds) and efficiency ("better societies")]. Furthermore, to deny these previous definitions and interpretations, which have come to us through the past historical body, would be to deny our own historical continuity, and would indicate a further splitting in Mead's process, leading to further fragmentation of meaning. Therefore, I am in discord with Mead: I feel that the ultimate goal that might be reached in following his course would just as likely be dystopia as utopia; as a friend of mine recently pointed out to me, the etymological root of utopia would make its meaning "no place", a space without place. This is not my idea of utopia.

These are only sketchy replies to Mr Loren's article, one which he described as sketchy. I feel the hindrance of space limitations that he felt and communicated in his article in the last edition of *The Philosophy Club Journal*. Yet perhaps by pressing into the last two problems in Mead's system, as I perceive both it and its consequences, we can at least open up our eyes to question the possibilities. The next to last problem is also semantical in nature, though not necessarily in a psycho-semantical sense, though possibly that, too, indirectly. The more serious concern has to do with the problem of meaning itself that is realized it one is to accord with Mead (or Loren's) conception and prescription. This is very simply brought in to focus by realizing that if a Buddhist, a Christian, and a Hindu all get together and speak the English word God, the use of the word God does not mean that they are all speaking about the same thing.

The problem here is not that they are not speaking about the same thing, but that by isolating themselves into their own subjective world conception, as Mead would have them do, the differences would never be communicated, and the individuals involved would never even realize that they are speaking about different conceptions of the word God. On a larger scale this possible consequence would lead into a splintering of society. Whether or not such a splintered society would be a "better society" is not something I would want to pass judgement upon, but I do think that human freedom to understand and be understood between and across multiple worlds would be facilitated by attempts at unifying word meanings, not by creating the possibility for each multiple world to isolate further into their dialectics. By creating that as a possibility, we would be creating a hindrance to the human ability to understand the unthinkable number of dialects that could conceivably be created, an understanding that would be necessary for human mobility into and out of the various multiple worlds in which we could possibly exist. This mobility speaks clearly of human freedom.

The last problem is tied closely to Mead's methodology, which seems to be directly borrowed from Lyotard's (or vice versa). Through my reading of Mead (through Loren), and Lyotard, I can see no difference in their points of view. This is of course bewildering, since each calls for the "activation of the differences"; each prescribes a return to the recognition of unique human subjective differences as the way to open up a continued dialogue, yet they are not different from each other. This contradiction is only resolved at a metalinguistic understanding of their prescriptions, but the metalinguistic resolve only furthers the need for clarification of terms. The paradox that we have to speak through, in this case, is that which is realized by taking into consideration the fact that, if I differ with Mead himself, I am agreeing with him. Therefore, I must differ by agreeing, in which case I must say that I differ with him: we are the same. I aim to cooperate. Yet I am different. I aim to posit a recursive system through which we might find the mean between utopia and dystopia, for each, in the end, is indistinguishable from the other (including the perfect mean: the middle ground of communication toward which I aim). By positing a recursive system, though, we can at least recognize the imperfections in our daily attempts at communication with others, and leave the continued dialogue open to allow for both similarities and differences, and leave the door open for the corrections that will forever need to be made. The good of such a system is that it breaks apart the distinctions between subject and object and provides for a reciprocal shaping creation in the world building process: one without the other can not exist. This is somewhat in accord with Mead's

breaking apart of the distinction between communicative and expressive speech, but my aim here is not to express, it is to communicate. What do I want to communicate? Only that there is no such thing as pure human subjectivity, even in Mead's own system: it is only in relation to a world that we can even think our own subjective response within it; furthermore, the communication that would be intrinsic to the purely subjective world would be purely expressive, in which case all individuals would be unending I's. This, I fear, would not be communication. And, through the setting of the self over and apart from the world is necessary, at times, at certain places, etc., the notion of world objects and the resultant "pure objectivity" that it would portend is, too, unthinkable. In this sense, I agree to differ with Mead, and am in agreement with Hegel, who posited that in normal human relations we are sometimes subjective and sometimes objective. Only through human relations do worlds become built. The truth is in neither/nor, but in the space in between, the space in which we hope to find our place. As for me, I repeat: I aim to communicate, so I open with a dialogue:

Mead: Retaining a means-end rationality closes off the possibility of creative discourse. The only way for us to open up communication is to activate the differences.

Me: Then, I activate the differences. You say that the only way to open up communication is by differing. As for me, well, I aim to cooperate. I aim to communicate. If the only way for me to do that is to differ, then I differ with you by saying that I differ (that is the means) in order to open up communication (that is the end). That is my aim (creative discourse).

In sum, then, what I am saying is that it is good to activate and acknowledge unique subjective differences. These are what give us our freedom to be our own persons. Going back to my earlier example, it is very good, indeed, to recognize that the Buddhist, the Christian, and the Hindu are entitled to the freedom to think of God in their own unique ways. But I think it is good, too, to communicate the differences, not in order to isolate these individuals into boxed compartments, but, rather, to open each up into the world of the others, so that the world of each can be widened. Without knowing that the word God means something different to each, a knowing and understanding that comes only through communication, we would never even begin to understand that there are worlds outside of our own individual subjectivities. It takes a certain measure of objectivity to open ourselves up to other worlds, and that, too, should be recognized, even by Sartre. With this, perhaps we can begin to understand the differences between expressive and communicative language, and work, once again, toward a balanced economy.

If this article appears edictorial in nature, so be it; it is only written in response to and in accordance with the context of the article in the last edition of *The Philosophy Club Journal*, and I hope that that, at least, is well understood.

by Socrates G Gianis

Our destiny is determined mainly by our ability to assert ourselves. Though circumstances play a significant role in directing the paths our lives take, our will is the governing force which dictates life's purpose. This sounds like a given understanding about human nature, yet it's the primary realization one must come to accept in order to live a life of fulfillment. So within this pluralism we must define our existence and determine our purpose.

Salt of the Earth

by Stephanie Long

When a work of art appears to be in advance of its period," wrote a great man, "it is really the period that has lagged behind the work of art." It is time that makes a classic, the eternal truth. Even if a brilliant work of art goes unrecognized when produced, years later it is often received with accolades. How, then, is it that no one has ever heard of the film *Salt of the Earth*? This film from the fifties is still unknown, especially in its native country. When it was made (despite ridiculous odds) it was underground and progressive. Surely America has grown up enough to appreciate its timely tale of struggling people. And yet, because of discrimination, fear, and determined closed minds in high places, *Salt of the Earth* remains buried.

The Story

The true tale unfolds in a company-owned mining town in New Mexico, 1951. Dangerous conditions on the job forced the underpaid workers, mostly chicano, to go on strike. After aborted attempts to break it, the owners bring up an injunction from the Taft-Hartley Act that prevents workers from picketing. Things are bleaker than ever before. The women of the town also want to demonstrate against the slum housing and no running water, so they take over the picket. In a culture where women are weak and subservient, desperation finally allows them to take the initiative. It's a story of labor fighting for rights, of chicanos looking for equality, and of women winning respect. Beautifully scripted, the dialogue is passionate yet simple, capturing the locale's flavor. Dramatic scenes of fighting, publicly and personally, are balanced with humor that grows out of the situation.

The Disgrace

The Red Scare hits America. "Dangerous" people must be labelled and rendered powerless. In order to find all the closet

communists, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was born. Under the faintest suspicion, a person could be brought before the committee and brutally questioned under law (Are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?). People who didn't readily cooperate with the committee were held in contempt and often fined or jailed. Then their names went out to potential employers so the "subversives" wouldn't get work: the blacklist.

HUAC hits Hollywood. While there were a few dissenters, most people, fearing for their future, answered questions and

Hollywood hysteria. Answering to no one, they could choose as provocative and controversial a topic as they wished. They set out to commit a crime to fit the punishment.

The Strike

Someone had heard of a small mining town that had been relentlessly striking for over a year. Enchanted, the filmmakers soon found themselves setting up in Silver City, New Mexico. Blacklisted actors, technicians, even musical scorers, found work again. Many black technicians who were ordinarily out of work were hired, making

"It's 1987. Times, people hope, have changed..."

named names. Ronald Reagan, then President of the Screen Actors Guild, supported HUAC's activities. There were ten men who became notorious for pleading the Fifth and refusing to answer HUAC. One of the "Hollywood Ten" was Herbert Biberman.

After serving jail sentences, the Ten found their lives in ruin. Some attempted to use fronts or pseudonyms (Wilson wrote *Lawrence of Arabia* under one). But at that time one made films in Hollywood or one didn't make films. Wilson, Biberman, and Jarrica got together, determined to make a film despite the studio system or

Salt from the Earth a mecca for untapped artistry. For the lead role, Mexican actress Rosaura Revueeltas was imported. The male lead went to Juan Chacon, leader of the strike. Much of the acting was done by the miners, virtually playing themselves.

The Shooting

Resources were more than limited. Because they were scorned, the group hardly had the best equipment available. Biberman had to employ many unusual narrative techniques, such as far away shots instead of using elaborate craning shots. Hollywood was hostile throughout, warning them

against making a supposed "communist propaganda" film. Death threats from the surrounding community came, along with vandalism. Town to national government kept a watchful eye. As if the unpredictable New Mexican weather wasn't hard enough to deal with, the lead actress was deported before all the shooting was completed.

The Post-production

Editing had to be done in secret. Friends' home equipment was used. To use a recording studio, the score was claimed to belong to a Mexican musical. Some removed scenes were carefully re-edited to make up for the final scenes that the lead could not finish.

The Reception

At last, after threats and blocks and the usual hectic problems of filmmaking, *Salt of the Earth* was completed. But who would run it? Somehow, perhaps because of the artistic reputation of the filmmakers, a distributor was found. But the film itself was picketed. It ran in thirteen theaters, out of the nation's 13,000. Hollywood still blocked it. Despite excellent reviews in the *New York Times*, and the rare papers that did review it, people refused to see it. The only success it enjoyed was overseas. And it enjoyed success—winning many international awards. "When a country won its independence, they ordered a print of *Salt of the Earth*," said Steven Mack, who with Barbara Moss made a documentary on the film. Because of an unfounded puritan hostility, *Salt of the Earth* was virtually unseen in America.

It's 1987. Times, people hope, have changed. Even the old enemy has opened up a little with its *glasnost*. So what about the USA? Maybe some small-time distributor will dig up *Salt of the Earth*. With the thriving videocassette market, who knows? By chance, you may find it playing in an obscure film art house. But for now, a national treasure is still unknown, hidden by the outdated hatred of a paranoid time.

As December draws to a close, it is customary for bastions of journalistic integrity (like, for instance, *us*) to prepare a comprehensive list of the most thoroughly amazing cinematic releases of the year. To that end, our crack team of reviewers have dredged up barely coherent memories of movies seen endless months ago (or last week) and encapsulated the vital essence of each film in a witty, articulate, and unpretentious paragraph. Here, then, in no particular order, are some of the Most Significant Films of 1987 (that we happened to see).

Full Metal Jacket: The worst best Viet Nam flick ever made. A visual masterpiece from Stanley Kubrick, flawed by its casting (Matt Modine in particular) and an uneven plot.

Raising Arizona: From the Cohen "it's hip to be hep" Brothers, those good ol' NYU boys. Funny, off-beat, and bizarre, *Raising Arizona* was a highlight of a fairly dull cinematic year. Nicholas Cage demonstrates his best acting to date. As one guy said, however: "I don't need two bozos from NYU telling me how to be cool."

Swimming to Cambodia: Barely a film at all, Jonathan Demme's video document of Spalding Gray's monologue captures the intimacy of a small art-house performance through cinematic restraint: a little dramatic lighting, a little evocative music, and a

lot of Spalding's face telling you a story that evolves from dozens of smaller stories. It has *something* to do with his bit part in *The Killing Fields*, but somewhere along the line it becomes much (much) more than an amusing anecdote spun by an experienced teller of tales.

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid: With *Matewan*, the best movie of this or any other year. It raises tough political and sexual questions, and its characters are vivid, multi-dimensional, and intriguing. It starts off a pastiche and non-linearizes into a vital story of our times and a critique (but not at all boring) of strategic approaches to life, and to revolution. Don't miss it!

Matewan: By new leftist John Sayles, it is the extremely dramatic true story of labor organizing in the West Virginia mines, that has perhaps the best shootout scene in cinema history. The class/race tensions and the excellent acting by the entire cast bring back the real West Virginia of the 1920s, and raise important questions (like *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*) about revolutionary strategy. One Manhattan audience rose to its feet at the end and applauded.

Walker: Mixes aggression, anger, and nerve with originality and a forthrightness of pur-

pose that can only be characterized by saying this film has balls. Directed by Alex Cox, *Walker* is ostensibly based on the true story of William Walker, a "Manifest Destiny" zealot who invaded Nicaragua in 1855, but the anachronisms scattered throughout the film turn it into a glorious slander of current American foreign policy. Performances by Ed Harris as Walker, Marlee Matlin as Ellen Martin, his deaf-mute fiancée, Peter Boyle as Cornelius Vanderbilt (who whips his flunkies with flowers) and a wild script by Rudy Wurlitzer make *Walker* an intriguing film experience—aside from its political value.

Fatal Attraction: Glen Close, a lonely successful woman, has a two-day lust-affair with Michael Douglas while his wife, Ann Archer (of *Falcon Crest*), is away with their daughter. When Douglas tries to tell Close it's over, she literally flips. Out of a jealous rage, Close boils the family's pet rabbit, ruins cars, kidnaps, slits her wrists and is finally put to death by both Archer and Douglas in the family's cozy bathtub. Close is great as a lecherous obsessive and Douglas's confusion about the whole deal is realistic. Definitely worth seeing, if just to get an inside glimpse of the mentality of some "other women".

RoboCop: As savage an extrapolation of American cultural tendencies as mainstream cinema could ever muster, borrowing heavily from (but improving upon) the square-jawed fascist-cop ethos of England's *Judge Dredd* comic book. A movie with such a dumb name has no right to be this good, but it is—thanks to a literate script, a host of superlative actors, and director Paul Verhoeven's deft, satiric touch.

Evil Dead 2: Sam Raimi's inspired rehash of his no-budget splatter fest resembles nothing so much as the live-action equivalent of a Chuck Jones cartoon. The tricky camera gymnastics and twisted humour of the first film have been multiplied a hundredfold to produce a relentlessly hilarious engine of entertainment (slowed only occasionally when a plot surfaces to inhibit the zombie-bashing fun).

Radio Days: Thank God Woody Allen still makes movies. Although the plot and atmosphere of *Radio Days* may have more appeal for older folk, Allen composes scenes and writes his scripts so well that it is staggering. Mia Farrow, Wallace Shawn, and a cast of greats and near-greats make for one good movie.

continued on page 11

December 11, 1987 page 9

BILLBOARDS

Pinter

by Kyle Silfer

Clasoseted away in Theater III of the Fine Arts Center, Harold Pinter's "The Dumb Waiter" lurched darkly to life on three occasions last week (December 3, 4, and 5). The play, a sinister one-act (guided in this instance by the competent directorial hand of E.M. Soro), develops suspense from vague dialogue, confirms suspicions with pointed allusions, and cements symbolic connections by veering into surrealism and slapstick. To divulge any of its specifics would be to undermine the author's intent, but for the sake of this review, the essentials are as follows: two characters of indeter-

minate occupation and origin wait in a tenement room for further instructions, steeling themselves for a task they've been summoned to perform countless times before, when—suddenly—the dumbwaiter, operated by a faceless authority on the floor above them, begins to deposit demanding notes, soberly requesting food and drink as if from a hotel cafe. Inexplicable reactions and painfully allegorical lines result—the aforementioned "surrealism and slapstick"—and with a discouraging wrench, the carefully-tendered realism of "The Dumb Waiter" gives way to unsubtle philosophical prattling and a Shocking Twist Ending.

But that's the play itself. The production

lives or dies on the merits of its two performers, irregardless of—or despite—directing, sets, and lighting (all of which pass muster admirably). To that end, Michael Cortese's Ben is a marvel of sneering incredulity and sardonic abuse. The angered excesses he is frequently called upon to simulate are joyfully accurate, every impassioned phrase drowned in the working-class British dialect Pinter ascribes to his characters. The grimaces of distaste that crawl across his countenance are utterly convincing as he eyes his fidgeting partner.

Anthony Morelli, as Gus, does a creditable job of portraying a psychologically subservient underling, but his characterization suffers from an uncertain mastery of

Gus's patois (especially in contrast with the more polished accents of Cortese). In a play with only two characters, however, such a shortcoming quickly becomes tiresome, and when half your time is spent ignoring a fault in half the production, the final experience is bound to suffer.

E.M. Soro's presentation of "The Dumb Waiter" has no glaring faults, but, similarly, it lacks any particular charms. It is, essentially, an unpretentious production of a pretentious play, and though that may be a credit to its cast and crew, the results are strangely lifeless. Perhaps [he opines] a more adventurous approach would have provided a less homogenized outcome. But then again, maybe not.

How I Got That Story

by Greta Guarton and Jung Min Yoon

"How I Got That Story" is an explosive melodramatic comedy written by Amlin Gray and directed by W C Kovacsik about a reporter in Am-bo land, a country patterned after Vietnam. The reporter, played by Steve Gold, goes to Am-bo land with the naive impression that he can report the news without becoming involved with the country and its plight. When he witnesses a man light himself on fire he finds himself expressing true emotions for the people of Am-bo land. It is there that he stops and reminds himself, "I'm not really here, I'm a reporter and I only record what happens." However, he soon finds that rationalizing his feelings is not good enough. He has already become very much a part of Am-bo land. His involvement eventually leads to his physical and spiritual deterioration.

Gold's performance seemed forced at first, but as the play continued he got the opportunity to prove his acting ability,

reaching a peak during the disturbing orphanage scene.

Ken Simon, who played three characters, did his best in the role of the photographer where he focused his energy.

Miyuki Daimon, as Li the prostitute, performed well and generated a great deal of laughter from the audience during the hospital scene, where she attempted to seduce the reporter.

In general, the play was well acted by the cast, although no one's performance stood out as exceptional.

The stage design left much to be desired. While its stark simplicity created a shocking effect, a more elaborate set may have placed the play in a more believable context. The scene changes were handled poorly, using a slide projector which did not advance automatically. The sound by Hodley Taylor and lighting by Elizabeth Stein were excellent, which created an effective atmosphere.

Overall, the play was startling and achieved its purpose. A few more weeks in production would have made this an excellent play.

THE BOUNCE BACK

continued from page 9

Tin Men: Danny DeVito finally plays something other than a cartoon character. Dreyfuss is excellent as a suave, conniving aluminum siding salesman. A cat-and-mouse game of childish pride between DeVito and Dreyfuss makes for an excellent, well-paced comedy, from the same crew who brought you *Diner*.

My Life as a Dog: Neither controversial or especially popular, this Swedish film was one of the summer's art-house delights. It tells the story of a precocious young boy, Ingemar, who loses his mother and dog during the course of the film. An aura of joyful bawdiness infiltrates. Indisputably, undeniably, an absolutely charming and precious cinematic endeavor.

The Untouchables: In barely 10 minutes on screen, DeNiro gives complete presence to the character of Capone. Stunning visual choreography executed in highly dramatic form raises this film above the

great-acting-but-so-what category, and who didn't hold their breath for the entire train station scene?

Wish you Were Here: An engaging—if slightly disturbing—tale of a rebellious teenage girl's struggle through adolescence in England after the war. Linda (Emily Lloyd) engages in unconventional and socially unacceptable behavior—lascivious liasons with men of all ages and frequent outcries of obscenities ("Bugger", "Up yer bum"). It's quirky, and it's good. See it just because it's British. Watch especially for the tap-dancing charmer during the opening and closing credits.

Hollywood Shuffle: A truly funny series of skits parodying the stereotypes of black actors in conventional movies. Robert Townsend directs and stars in this independent film. Financed with a stack of credit cards and produced on absconded film stock, it's surprisingly adept and poignantly humorous.

Pinter Plus

by John Gabriel

The student productions of Ionesco's "The Bald Soprano" and Pinter's "The Collection" should be videotaped and shown to prospective theatre majors. These two high quality productions are the best advertisement for the theatre department one could imagine. They were performed last week at the Fanny Brice Theatre and, if you haven't seen them yet, you'll have another opportunity at 8 PM December 10-12.

The star of the evening was Louise Millman as Mrs Smith, whose Pythonesque facial distortions in "The Bald Soprano" were grotesque and hilarious. This absurdist satire of English manners rises to a crescendo of chaos that was excellently orchestrated by director Scott Ng.

Although Ms Millman's performance was undeniably the center of attention, none of the actors were overshadowed or upstaged by her presence. Stephen Fox, Georgia Aristidou, and David Reichold offer professional caliber deadpan performances as the absurdly staid Mr Smith and the Martins. Elizabeth Pisco is charming as Mary, the Smith's overly emotional maid, and Margot Kagan does a rambunctious turn as the fire chief.

Harold Pinter once said his plays were all about "the weasel under liquor cabinet." Lori Fike's direction of "The Collection" brings out all the mean animal subtleties that lurk under the surface of Pinter's characters. And the actors' performances were equal to her direction.

The play is set simultaneously in the homes of James Horne and Harry Kane, whose lover Bill Lloyd may or may not have had an affair with James' wife Stella. It's not a simple "did they or didn't they?" plot, though. Pinter is more concerned with the underlying suspicions, frustrations, and



manipulations that motivate the actions of these characters. Scott Ng and Michael Oscar Pacheco each have a powerful presence as Harry Kane and James Horne who use their suspicions to dominate over their oppressed and timid lovers, Bill and Stella, as played by Basil Muir and Monique Summers, respectively.

The intersecting themes—the unleashed frustrations in "The Bald Soprano" and Pinter's "Weasel under the cabinet"—compliment each other, and make this an interesting double bill, for its own sake. That it's well-directed and acted is a definite plus. Check it out this weekend at the Fanny Brice in Stage XII.

River's Edge: The biggest hype of the year. A mediocre film with a slew of excellent performances (including Dennis Hopper, Crispin Glover, and an enclave of other new young actors who are already making their mark in a number of Hollywood features). Critics everywhere raved over its portrayal of teenage anomie without noticing that Alex Cox covered the same material, with a lot more humour, in *Repo Man* four years previous. But the film has its moments, especially when Hopper reminisces over a darkly comic motorcycle accident.

The Princess Bride: Good to take your girlfriend to.

Compiled by

Mitchell Cohen
Michael DePhillips
Karin Falcone
John Gabriel
Craig Goldsmith
Quinn Kaufman
Kristin Rusin
Kyle Silfer

Video

by Craig Goldsmith

The West, both the video exhibit and the indefinable place, create images of the desert, of pueblos and sandstone towers, vast arrays of radar dishes, a hot sun and a blue, blue sky. *The West*, a half-hour long video piece, along with series of paintings inspired by computer graphics (by Mel Alexenberg), is currently on display at the Fine Arts Center Gallery.

The West is technically brilliant study of the American west, mainly of deserts and prairie land, with a few sequences of the Rocky Mountains thrown in for good measure. Steina and Woody Vasulka, pioneers in video/audio art since the late sixties, produced *The West* in 1983 and '84. Steina did the video work, Woody set up the "four channel audio environment", an artistic euphemism for a high fidelity, Fripp-Eno like soundtrack. The exhibit is set up on a row of six television sets, two video tapes are shown simultaneously, on alternating screens. The effect is striking—the two tapes often show the same scene, but from different angles, or in different color hues—the images converge or diverge from each other at varying speeds. The viewer is totally thrown into the West—the desert and mountains—but with the warped eye of Vasulka's camera.

And Vasulka's camera-eye is truly warped. Many of the sequences are filmed with a concave mirror mounted about a foot in front of the lens; as the camera turns, a distorted, curved image of what is behind the camera is seen, as well as the area in front of the camera. Vasulka often places such a rotating camera in the center of a vast desert plateau, or in the middle of a field of rotating radar dishes. There are no people, only the land, or machines, and the ubiquitous mirror. Vasulka takes these already complex shots and then messes with them a little, gradually, so at first you don't catch it. By the time you realize that the colors are very different, or that another scene has been superimposed, you are drawn in to Vasulka's way of looking at the land.

Vasulka takes time to introduce you to her own syntax, she starts with one vari-

ation, then adds another, then another, until the six screens are filled with a virtual kaleidoscope of turning, shifting visions of the dry American west. At times, the land is almost unrecognizable, Ms. Vasulka's sense of post-production composition is excellent. But just when the piece begins to totally remove itself from its landscape

Still More Reality Sandwiches



Steina and Woody Vasulka in Kiva Rindonada, Chaco, New Mexico during the shooting of *The West* in 1983.

roots, Vasulka subtly reminds the viewer what you are looking at, be it the trees of the Rockies or the ceremonial sites of Chaco Canyon.

The only real flaw with *The West* is its endless variations on a theme. Ms. Vasulka's excellent eye and sense of composition are offset by the dullness of repeti-

tion. After going through all the permutations of an image offered her by color, angle, and superimposition, Ms. Vasulka repeats herself, rather than finding something new. The panoramic scenes set up across all six TVs, with moving planes of color superimposed on top, were a nice break from the seemingly endless sequences of rotating camera shots. But still, after twenty minutes, restlessness sets in, and the machine-like droning of the soundtrack, which complements the piece nicely, becomes so soothing that I started looking around for the cots.

The other half of the gallery is set up for an exhibition of large-scale paintings and smaller mixed-media works by Mel Alexenberg. Titled *Computer Angels*, the axis of the show is a digitized computer version of a flying angel by Rembrandt. Alexenberg paints this angel in a large format, preserving the computer graphic feel. He portrays the angel in various attitudes—hovering over a rainbow colored UPC symbol, with another angel in a blue sky. He has also taken the image and superimposed it over common ads, or on small squares of various material (an angel on cork, on a mirror, on a prism sticker, *ad nauseum*).

In biblical Hebrew, the masculine form of the feminine art means computer angel. Alexenberg uses this semantic novelty as a conceptual basis for his work. In the exhibition guide, Alexenberg states that "computer angels" are everywhere in our everyday lives, that they inhabit electronic devices and magazines food and airports. He believes that the electronic age is one of spiritual rebirth (overtones of New Age thinking?), and that his angels are an attempt at unearthing the divine around us.

Maybe so. I would have no problem believing that computers and machines are housing spirits, whether angelic or demonic, but Mr. Alexenberg's work offers no real message, and visually, the repetition of the same angel on 18 pieces is uninteresting.

The Fine Arts Center Gallery is open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 12pm to 4pm. *The West*, thirty minutes long, shows continuously at those hours.

Concert

THE ALARM—They're alright

by Karin Falcone

Going alone to a concert by a band I'm unfamiliar with could have been worse. It was my first concert experience in the Stony Brook gym. I saw no familiar faces except the SAB crowd who I recognized from SOC 337. This class may just be one of the many prerequisites for SAB membership (for experience in saving seats for your friends in an overcrowded lecture hall). Rob Schachter was sure to be noticed in a hot pink sweater, contrasting the many shades of drab and awful hues of hair dye the rest of the crowd sported in the packed gym.

I took my place standing in the bleachers soon after the Alarm took the stage. Immediately the lighting caught my attention. It was heavy on dry ice, and burned harsh on the small stage, but I came to enjoy the melodramatic touch it added to a show essentially high on melodrama, saved by sincerity, and sealed with some fine early Edge-like guitar by Dave Sharp.

Originality is not one of the Alarm's stronger points, but I didn't expect it to be. I found myself enjoying the show into "Walls of Jericho", a somewhat less commercial sounding number with a heavy drum line. The crowd was bopping sedately during songs, but going wild with applause after. They seemed to want to get into it but were held back by some oppressive force—it may have been the bleachers and the chairs

and the rails and the goons with flashlights, but I think it was the pretentious image of reserved cool that's the current rage among the latest mutation of the post-punker.

Vocalist Mike Peters was assaulting this force all the way through with heartfelt urgency. He encouraged choruses of "Goin' Out in the Place of Glory", awash in beams of red and gold light, as if every voice really

meant the world to him. It was hard not to believe his pleasure was not in earnest. The crowd suddenly caught on during, of all things, a rockabilly number right after.

An acoustic protest ballad followed. "I went out among the people with my guitar to see what I could feel", was Peters' rasp introduction. The audience wasn't nearly as impressed with this form of song as with the



Mike Peters of the Alarm

Pied Piper effect of many of the Alarm's more popular numbers. The recordings I'd heard on the radio, which I felt sounded canny and vaguely inspired were more successful live. The band continually tried to lead the crowd into a realm of communicatory, participatory frenzy. The huge response after each number seemed meaningless to the band. They didn't want detached observers; they demanded a more daring homage in return for their own energy and vulnerable stance. "Are you going to be there when we come back?" Peters asked a second time. It sounded less rhetorical in the context of their goal: They really wanted an answer.

Toward the end of the show, rabid fans in reserved seats began to prove their loyalty by squirting decks of playing cards into the air. I was impressed. The vocalist manipulated everyone into a hush, stalked to the edge of the stage slowly, and splayed his own deck into the crowd. It was an odd sort of communication, but it was close to what the Alarm was trying for.

Bits of paper with red flowers and the usual Bic lighters were other props the crowd came handy with. Two long encores seemed proof of the Alarm's devotion, and sincerity was not something I expected from the WLIR airplay pool self-glorifying British bands. "You did alright!" Peters shouted to the audience as he left the stage for the last time. An honest assessment all around.