

Aggie Players' '6 Rooms Riv Vu' offers many levels of emotion, drama, comedy

By DON ATKINSON JR.
Of The Battalion Staff

Probably the biggest compliment that can be given to the Aggie Players production of "6 Rms Riv Vu" is that it is difficult to write about.

When you consider the depth of the characters involved, the importance of their social framework and the range of emotions portrayed, any review must deal with this work on several levels at once.

In this 1970 play written by Bob Randall, two people in the throes of a mid-life crisis find themselves trapped in a vacant New York apartment overlooking a river. They argue, find common ground, argue some more and eventually reach out to each other.

Understandably, this would be a difficult play to translate onto the stage. If one element was out of place, the entire structure would collapse.

"6 Rms Riv Vu" deals with real people and emotions. The play creates such a perceptible reality that it cannot be faked. The emotions and lives of the characters must be re-created, not merely mimicked.

Fortunately, the Aggie Players production starring Ross Lambert and Christina Vela O'Connor succeeds brilliantly.

Lambert plays Paul, an advertising copywriter who feels that his childhood has slipped past him. He loves his wife but feels trapped by the marriage. Most of all, Paul is struggling to convince himself that his life actually means something.

O'Connor plays Anne, a housewife whose life has gone pretty much the way she planned it, but now she needs something more. She too is struggling to find some meaning in her daily existence.

Although O'Connor is the first major actor to appear on stage, it is Lambert who dominates the early portion of the play. Ironically, he does so with a single word: "Yuck!"

With that word and a glance out of the apartment window, Lambert speaks volumes about his character. You get an immediate sense of who



Photo By Söndra Robbins

Senior theater arts majors Maryellen Brennan and Jonathan Burke co-star in the Aggie Players/MSC Dinner Theater production of "6 Rms Riv Vu." The play will run today and Friday.

he is, and how he deals with life.

In all fairness, O'Connor has to play her character straight at first, so she doesn't have the flexibility to get away with the things Lambert does.

But, towards the middle of the play, she pulls off the same feat with a single look. Anne and Paul finally admit they like each other, and there is a pause.

In that moment, O'Connor throws a look of pure warmth at Lambert that is absolutely devastating. She deserves a lot of credit for managing to pull off that scene.

If "6 Rms Riv Vu" sounds like a drama, that's only half of it. Actually, the play has more in common

with the works of Neil Simon and Edward Albee to a lesser degree than it does with anything else.

The dialogue is well-crafted in its intensity and ability to make even the simplest exchange interesting. For example, during act one, Anne and Paul are discussing their spouses.

Anne mentions that her husband has sagging pectoral muscles in his chest, something that he is apparently embarrassed about. She immediately feels guilty for saying it.

"I shouldn't have told you," she says. Paul, trying to be nice, tells her: "If I had sagging pectorals, I

wouldn't mind if my wife mentioned it in passing."

"I didn't mention it in passing," Anne exclaims. "I drove out of my way to get there!"

Moments like that make "6 Rms Riv Vu" a delight to watch.

Even if you aren't much of a theater-goer, this play is definitely entertaining. Everyone in the Aggie Players, from the director to the cast to the set designer, deserves a round of applause.

Showtimes for "6 Rms Riv Vu" are today and Friday at 8 p.m. in Rudder Forum. Tickets are \$5 and are available at the Rudder Box Office.

Pop group Chicago disappoints at Dallas concert with lackluster effort, sappy music, short-lived set

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

The pop-rock group Chicago showed its best and worst sides Saturday night at the Starplex in Dallas.

During the '80s, Chicago seemed content to rest on past success and release a bunch of sappy tunes from time to time. This was tolerable because they were at least making new music that was incorporated with the older material during live performances.

Besides, Chicago won a large audience using the sap, so who could blame them for going with the hit-making formula.

However, the group's first tour in the '90s has shown an ugly side — Chicago is becoming a nostalgia band.

Chicago is not supporting a new album on this tour, and the only new material played was a lame tune, "Hearts In Trouble" from the new Tom Cruise film, "Days Of Thunder."

Even more disturbing was the lack of zest in this performance. Chicago has always been a lengthy live band, but they played only 19 songs. The performance time barely reached an hour-and-a-half after a three-song

encore. In spite of this, there was a good side.

Original members Rober Lamm (piano), Lee Loughnane (trumpet), Walter Parazaider (saxophone and flute) and Jimmy Pankow (trombone) kept this show from being a disaster with animated performing and quality playing.

Parazaider took a gung-ho flute solo during "Just You and Me" and Loughnane played a lights-out trumpet solo during the introductory part of "Does Anybody Really

Know What Time It Is?"

Pankow was the most animated performer of the group. He danced around stage, and he seemed to genuinely enjoy performing. Pankow also blew me away with a trombone solo during "Beginnings."

Rober Lamm has faded in the background during the '80s, but his past compositions, "Dialogue Part One and Two," "Saturday In The Park," "Beginnings," "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?" and "25 or 6 to 4," added the quality

music this concert needed.

Even his more recent song "We Can Stop The Hurtin'" was better than the modern Chicago sap.

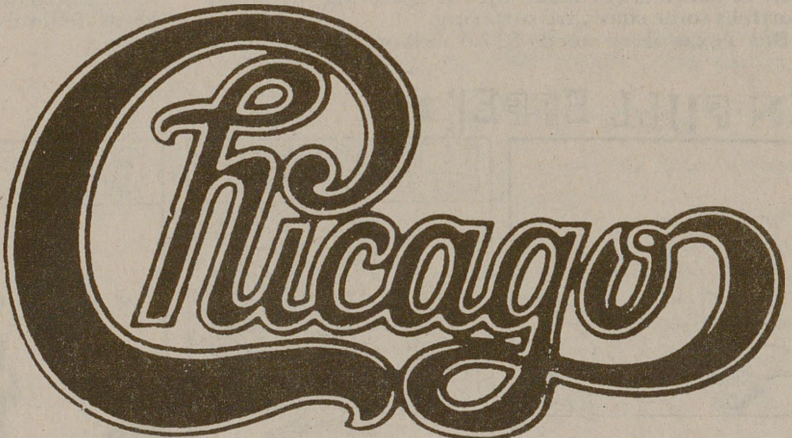
The leader of Chicago's sap movement and the group's new voice is Bill Champlin. He wooed and wowed the audience while performing recent hits, "Look Away" and "You're Not Alone."

However, I found his intense "oohs and ahs" vocal style tiresome during many of his twinkle-toe passion songs. Why does Chicago think they need a new voice when Lamm has the smoothest and best voice of the band?

Bass guitarist Jason Scheff sang former Chicago singer Peter Cetera's songs "Stay The Night," "You're The Inspiration" and "If You Leave Me Now." Scheff has a good voice and matched Cetera's high notes.

New drummer Trace Kimble (Replacing original drummer Danny Seraphine.) was adequate when playing the modern beat music, but he was too stiff during the more snappy older songs like "Make Me Smile."

If Chicago would have de-emphasized the sap and played longer, the concert would have been better. Overall, the show was a disappointment.



Digital Underground hops it with 'Packets'

Digital Underground
Sex Packets
Tommy Boy

By JOHN RIGHTER
Of The Battalion Staff

A bizarre collage of sex, personas and hip hop mark Digital Underground's *Sex Packets*.

The Underground has already cracked mainstream MTV with their hilarious video for the single "Humpty Dance," a song based on Underground leader Shock-G's alter ego, Humpty Hump.

As infectious as the "Humpty Dance" might be, the song slightly misrepresents the rest of *Sex Packets* (for one, Humpty Hump is only a supporting persona).

Sex Packets, hardly a rap album, is more accurately an infusion of hip hop (a style of urban music that lies between rap and funk on the decibel and motion scales) that blends a chunk of rhythm and blues with a generous jigger of George Clinton-styled funk (but then who doesn't add a little Clinton to their sound?).

The album is broken into several storylines that work as vague concepts such as the evolution of Humpty Hump, the annual "Gut-fest" celebration (a sex show) and a collection of five songs that detail the use of "Packets."

Packets are an imaginary, illegal sex drug that Shock-G describes as "more powerful than a hallucinogen" and are the "one thing safer than your hand."

The "Packet" numbers include a pair of piano tunes, an illegal, mock street exchange of a packet, Shock-G's startling acclamation to the sexual realism of the sex tablet and Humpty Hump's introduction to packets by a street dealer.

Again and again a dub of an orgasmic Shock-G mumbling, "It feels so real," is followed by a woman's lascivious reply, "It is."

The "Packets" concept is quite a statement on the fear of AIDS that exists for today's younger generation — even the fictitious "packet" drug is described as an illuminating object shaped like a condom.

The fact the Underground is so concerned with safe sex (they men-

tion condom use in several songs and list their album sides as "safe side" and "sex side") is not surprising in light of the explicit sexual nature of *Sex Packets*.

The album contains an imprinted warning label for language, supplied

"Sex packets are an imaginary, illegal sex drug that Shock-G describes as 'more powerful than a hallucinogen' and are the 'one thing safer than your hand.'"

voluntarily by either the band or Tommy Boy. It's not abusive language that demands mature guidance, but the album is a description of sexual fantasies and confrontations with vague allusions to drugs.

Unfortunately, the rap and hip-

hop industry needs to consider either the explicitness of its material or the demographics of its audience.

Whether the genre wishes to acknowledge the fact or not, it is young kids (predominantly males) that purchase their albums (probably because the sexual handling of the material, which borders on retardation, fits the male-adolescence mentality).

And when Digital Underground, 2 Live Crew, L.L. Cool J, and others start appearing on the cover of teen mags, a distinction between teen idol status or adult titillator is in order.

Digital Underground has a lot of potential, and *Sex Packets* fulfills that potential in several places. You can't help but love Humpty Hump and his new dance craze. The "Sex Packets" concept is both interesting and intelligent, and the rebellious nature of "Dooowtchyalike" is endearing.

A little libido control and more "umph" in their arrangements will lift Digital Underground to the top of a sky-high hip-hop network that's skimming the cream off the rap fringe.

'Robo Cop 2' copies original with violence, action, plot, but still packs punch as sequel

Robo Cop 2
Starring Peter Weller
and Nancy Allen
Directed By Irvin Kershner
Rated R

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

"Robo Cop 2" has enough violence to make a "Friday The 13th" film look more like "Driving Miss Daisy."

Of course, the action and violence was a big part of what made the first "Robo Cop" so successful. The filmmakers didn't forget that winning formula in the sequel.

There are enough explosions, shoot-outs and fight scenes to make any die-hard action fan drool.

"Robo Cop 2" also has many of the same plot devices of the first film.

Peter Weller returns as Robo Cop and not much has changed. His partner Lewis, played by Nancy Allen, is still there, and the Detroit police are striking.

The crooked, criminal, corporate bad guys, OCP, are also up to their old tricks — this time, a hostile takeover of Detroit (actual film shooting took place in Houston) and a new cyborg for Robo Cop to deal with.

If that wasn't enough, a new addictive and dangerous drug, Nuke, is being distributed by a psychoscumgag, Cain.

The drug syndicate, corporate bad guys and crazy cyborg were plot devices of the first film.

Further, the quirkiness and exaggeration of the future is still strong in "Robo Cop 2." The popular of ball commercials and news programs are around, but they lack the punch and surprise-value of the first film.

Although the plot looks like the filmmakers do explore Robo Cop's character.

Robo Cop must decide if he's a man, Alex Murphy — the police officer Robo Cop was made from machine. While the conflict is overly compelling, it still fits into the storyline.

Unfortunately, Robo Cop disappears for periods of time while the plot unfolds. He is the one element of this film that consistently maintains an interest. When Robo Cop isn't around, neither is the fun.

However, director Irvin Kershner keeps the action intense, and even builds solid suspense in his scenes. He loyally sticks with references to the first film.

This course of direction maintains originality, but Kershner recreates the mood and tone of the original film that was directed by Paul Verhoeven.

Although many of the elements of the first film are used again, "Robo Cop 2" is still a fun film. If you enjoyed the first "Robo Cop," there's no reason you won't enjoy the sequel.

Violinist Lack amazes in chamber concert

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

Musicians from the University of Houston and Texas A&M formed an entertaining team for the fourth of five Chamber Music Concerts at Rudder Theater Monday night.

The Chamber Music Series is part of the Texas Music Festival. The concerts are sponsored by Humana Hospital in Brazos Valley and the Texas A&M College of Liberal Arts.

Continuing the theme of "Brahms and His Times," Fredell Lack (violin) and A&M's coordinator of music Werner Rose (piano) were the featured performers of Concerto in D Major for piano, violin and string quartet by Ernest Chausson.

Lack, a well-known recitalist, played intensely and took several solos throughout the multi-movement piece. Rose, A&M's lone participant, accompanied Lack during many of her solos.

The combination of piano and violin was enjoyable. The Concerto in D Major is a dramatic piece of music — a nice balance of lively, intense sections with softer, more introspective parts.

Kenneth Goldsmith (violin), Albert Muenzer (violin), Lawrence Wheeler (viola) and Anthony Elliot (cello) comprised the string quartet during Chausson's piece.

After an intermission, the same quartet returned with Milton Raimo's (viola), former artistic director of UH school of music, to perform Quintet No. 2 in G Major by Johannes Brahms.

Quintet No. 2 is more uplifting than Chausson's Concerto in D Major. The Brahms piece had a thick and big sound that was, for lack of a better term, "Beethoven-ish."

The four-movement piece has a pleasant, melodic second movement. A livelier third movement follows. But the fourth movement is an inspiring piece of music that should thrill any formal composition fan.

However, there was a problem — digital watches. During the softest, most melodic parts of the performance, high pitch beeping from a digital watch could be heard. This is terribly distracting. If you have a digital watch, leave it at home when you go to a formal composition performance.

Still, the occasional beeping couldn't spoil an entertaining performance of 19th century music. If you like romantic period composers, then the Chamber Music Series will entertain.

The final part of the Chamber Music Series is Monday night in Rudder Theater at 7:30. Tickets are \$5 for students and senior citizens, 60 years or older. For other adults, tickets are \$8. All tickets are available at the Rudder Box Office. For more information, call 845-1234.



Photo By Söndra Robbins

Cellist Anthony Elliot was part of a string quartet that performed Monday night at Rudder Theater.