

Stage Center's 'Rain' sustains suspense, drama with strong performances, script

By DON ATKINSON JR.
Of The Battalion Staff

Any drama teacher will tell you that conflict is the heart of a good story, no matter how peaceful it may appear on the surface.

The members of Stagecenter understand this concept and prove it with their latest production of W. Somerset Maugham's "Rain," a play adapted from "Miss Thompson," an earlier story written by Maugham.

Interestingly enough, the version of "Rain" currently being performed by the group is an original adaptation by Stagecenter member Jimmy Schooley, also based on the Maugham story.

Another version of "Rain," written by John Colton and Clemence Randolph in 1922, also exists, but the language and references are outdated. The Schooley adaptation is clearly superior for today's audiences.

"Rain" takes place in 1938 on an American Samoan island, Pago Pago, at a boarding house owned by Dr. Joseph Horn (Harold Presley).

During a heavy rainstorm, a ship is quarantined, and its passengers are forced to stay for 10 days on the island. Among them are the Reverend Robert Davidson (Michael Rose), his wife Esther (Cathy McWhorter), Dr. Donald McPhail (Donnie Wilson), his wife Jennifer (Lynn McDaniel) and Sadie Thompson (Kathy Schultz).

Sadie is an uninhibited woman whose behavior is a constant source of aggravation for the Davidson's.

Within a short period of time, the reverend and his wife prove to be overly religious, prejudiced people. Mrs. Davidson mentions in disgust that Horn is not only a negro, but college-educated at that.

Sadie proves to be their focal point for righteous indignation, and she is hounded mercilessly. The reverend even goes so far as to have the Pago Pago governor issue a restraining order against her.

"Rain" is a complex play with subtleties hidden in almost every ges-



Harold Presley plays Joe Horn and theater arts major Kathy Schultz stars as Sadie

Thompson in Stage Center's production of "Rain."

Photo by Söndra Robbins

ture and phrase. The fact that the Stagecenter cast and crew were able to pull it off as effectively as they did is a credit to them.

Since the entire cast did such an excellent job, it would be hard to mention above-average performances. However, a few of the actors really outdid themselves and deserve the credit.

Among them is Schultz for her performance as Sadie. The character is wild and flirty, but Schultz played her with a touch of sensitivity and innocence. She garnered the audiences sympathies early, which generated a great deal of suspense as to the outcome of the story.

Also worth mentioning are Rose and McWhorter as the Davidson's. Both had to play their characters full of religious fury, a touch of hypocrisy and even a hint of sexual fixation on the part of the reverend. Rose and McWhorter deserve a lot of credit for adding the proper element of friction to the play.

Director Rick Landmann also deserves a round of applause for giving the actors room to develop their characters. The action is neither overdone nor bogged down in its own seriousness.

"Rain" deals with the idea that people full of moral, righteous values can actually be detrimental to

society. Maugham was a homosexual and no doubt suffered from those acting out of religious indignation.

In a sense, the play actually asks the audience to imagine a world without these irritating do-gooders. The Stagecenter production of "Rain" is an example of what good theater is all about. Prepare yourself for a moving experience.

Stagecenter is offering three more presentations of "Rain," today, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$6 for students, \$5 for senior citizens and \$3.50 for children under 12. For additional information, call 846-0287.

Classics, unknowns flood video stores this week

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

There will be a flood of new films appearing at your local video store this Wednesday. Unfortunately, most of them are poor B-films that were never good enough for theater release.

In spite of the glut of low-budget films, there is good news. MGM is continuing its re-release of classic films on video.

Mutiny On The Bounty (1965) will please any Marlon Brando fan. He plays the first mate and mutiny leader Fletcher Christian. Although not as good as the classic 1935 version with Charles Laughton and Clark Gable, this film is entertaining. Trevor Howard also stars as Captain Bligh.

"Sound of Music" may be the true Julie Andrews classic, but fans of the actress will enjoy **Hawaii (1966)**. This film is a lavish production based on the James Michener novel that explores the western disruption of Hawaiian culture. It's a bit Sappy, but fun.

Other classics appearing Wednesday are **A Bridge Too Far** with Robert Redford, Michael Caine and Sean Connery, **Raintree County** with Montgomery Clift, Elizabeth Taylor and Eva Marie Saint and **Quo Vadis** with Peter Ustinov, Deborah Kerr and Robert Taylor.

Hard To Kill
Rated R

Release Date — Wednesday
You wish this was an anomaly, but the fact that "Hard To Kill" is one of the dumbest, most unbelievable films of this year and yet, also one of the most successful and popular, is unfortunately no black sheep.

Moviegoers should be ashamed for seeing this garbage tale of a police officer ambushed and shot at his home, subsequently sent into a seven-year coma.

New clod on the block, Steven Seagal, stars as the tough, but hated officer, Mason Storm, who we are led to believe is able to fully cooperate from his seven-year coma in a matter of weeks.

Once recovered, Storm of course sets out to avenge his shooting and the death of his wife. Coincidences conveniently pop up left and right, explaining the safe return of his assumed dead son, and his previous assailants discover that Storm is in fact not dead.

Seagal is utterly awful aside from

Video Spotlight

Dead Calm
Rated R

If you're looking for suspense, "Dead Calm" is the film for you. Made by Kennedy/Miller, the same producers who gave us the "Mad Max" trilogy, "Dead Calm" is a film guaranteed to put you on the edge of your seat and keep you there.

Starring Nicole Kidman ("The Edge of Thunder"), Sam Neil and Billy Zane, "Dead Calm" concerns a husband and wife on a sailing vacation at sea to recover from the death of their baby, killed in an auto accident.

Things seem okay until the encounter a derelict vessel with one survivor (Zane) who turns out to be loony-tunes.

The husband gets stranded on the derelict, and his wife is abducted in the other boat. What the wife struggles with a madman, the husband must repair the sinking vessel and give chase.

The best moments in "Dead Calm" involve the madman. Played by Zane as some sort of demented stand-up comic, he creates a formidable adversary for the other characters.

"Dead Calm" is a disturbing, but enjoyable film full of suspense and definitely worth renting.

Grade: B
• DON ATKINSON JR.

his martial arts routines, and his interest (the utter heartbreak of his dead wife dispels real fast), Kelly Brock, is also a disgrace. The violence is explicit and exploitative, the plot unrealistic and the action repetitive.

For those of you who haven't seen "Hard To Kill" — do yourselves a favor and don't demean yourself by seeing it now. If you get off to violence for violence's sake, than at least go for the real thing and rent a Clint Eastwood flick.

• JOHN RIGHTEY

Other Releases:
The Dive, Raven Red Kiss-Off, A Summer Story, Peacemaker, Night of the Fox, Hanussen, Vietnam, Texas and Courage Mountain

— release date is July 25 for all films
Previewed videos and release dates are courtesy of 2 Day Video.

Garfield's comedy special ends with hilarity

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

Laughs, laughs and more laughs.

That's probably the best way to sum up Garfield's Thursday Night Live comedy special. Anchored by nationally popular comedians Gary Bun Richardson and Ron Shock, TNL expanded to five hilarious shows last Thursday through Saturday.

This past weekend was a rare opportunity to see two national comedians perform in Bryan-College Station. Richardson was certainly the busiest comedian of the weekend. He performed on all three nights. Comedians Dan Merriman and Mike Sterner joined Richardson on Thursday.

Shock, who performed two shows on Friday and Saturday night, proved just why he's on the verge of superstardom. Considered a "modern day Will Rogers," Shock told tales of sex, giraffes, and what he described as "the best dope story you ever heard" (It was).

During the special's final show on Saturday, Shock gave Oral Roberts credit for getting him into comedy. When he was looking for new material, though, Shock prayed.

"I prayed to God for a joke, and God gave me Jim and Tammy Faye Baker. You just can't write stuff this good," he said.

"It's my job to think of this stuff. Comedy is easy, just read the newspaper."

Places as much as people become a victim of Shock's humor. He claimed Des Moines, Iowa was a French term meaning "void of life."

Shock's performance highlighted a strong evening of comedy. Responding to a standing ovation, Shock returned for an encore that stretched his performance to more than an hour-and-a-half.

Gary Bun Richardson performed before Shock, and he lived up to his claim of being a "Good 'Ole Boy." Richardson howled throughout his show, and he delivered his jokes with cheerleader enthusiasm.

His charm was contagious. Most of the audience howled with Richardson as he described the curious relationship between people from Texas and Louisiana.

"People in Louisiana will deep fry a rock, and Texans will try to eat it," he said. "People over there (Louisiana) don't buy their meat at the store, they run over it."

"Contrary to popular belief, some people around there have front teeth."

Aside from his friendly jokes about Louisiana, Richardson's humor centered on Texas.

"The Texas economy has had it

"George Bush Drive will always be Jersey to me. That (name change) was the biggest Eddie Haskell, butt-kissing move I've ever seen."

— Jason Porter,
Comedian

rough lately," he said. "Even Ethiopians were telling Houston jokes with pictures of skinny oil men."

Richardson is an entertaining comedian, but his performance did not match the quality or hilarity of Shock's. Still, he was the perfect set-up man for Shock's escapades.

Local comedian and A&M student Jason Porter returned to TNL as the opening performer for Shock and Richardson on Friday and Saturday. Porter is the opening act for TNL during the fall and spring semesters.

Porter's style is somewhat similar to comedian Richard Lewis, but he's certainly not a Lewis-clone because his off-beat humor is unique, witty and most importantly, funny.

Porter took advantage of his familiar surroundings with a barrage of local jokes that kicked-off the show in good-time style.

"George Bush Drive will always be Jersey to me," he said. "That (name change) was the biggest Eddie Haskell, butt-kissing move I've ever seen."

The audience roared in agreement.

Porter also offered some candid insight about men and women.

"I figured out why women look at men's butts," he said. "It's because that's where we keep the wallet. Guys, now you know what side of your pants to keep your wallet."

Porter will return to Thursday Night Live this fall as the opening performer.

The final performance of the comedy special climaxed a laugh-loaded stretch of comedy for Bryan-College Station. It was rowdy, off-color fun.

TNL will go back to its regular format today with comedians Jim Villanucci and Steven J. Moore. Showtime tonight is 9, and tickets are \$5. You must be 21 or older to attend. For more information, call Garfield's at 693-1736.



Ron Shock's performances at Garfield's highlighted a strong weekend of comedy.



Local comedian and A&M student Jason Porter returned to Garfield's with strong opening performances on Friday and Saturday.

'Quick Change' amuses, lacks blockbuster luster

Quick Change
Starring Bill Murray, Randy Quaid, Geena Davis and Jason Robards
Directed by Howard Franklin and Bill Murray
Rated R

By DON ATKINSON JR.
Of The Battalion Staff

I have to admit I had high hopes that "Quick Change," the new comedy starring Bill Murray, would be the first real blockbuster of the summer.

The 1990 summer movie season has been a dud. "Dick Tracy" didn't live up to expectations, "Total Recall" wasn't the box-office monster it was predicted to be and just about every other film released in the last two months has been a sequel.

Ho-hum. Unfortunately, I have good and bad news about "Quick Change."

The good news: "Quick Change" is an entertaining film. The bad news: It won't be the summer blockbuster I had hoped for.

The reason is that "Quick Change" is a subtle film, full of clever writing and plot twists that will delight most audiences. The only thing holding this film back from blockbuster status is that it doesn't have a lot of easy jokes and quick catch-phrases ("We came, we saw, we kicked ass!") like Murray said in the mega-hit "Ghostbusters."

What "Quick Change" does have is a lot of really good acting, especially Murray, and an endless succession of hearty chuckles.

Murray told Premiere magazine he wanted "Quick Change" to be a film about New York. The main character, Grimm (Murray), is fed up with the city and commits a robbery to vent his anger. On his way to the airport, however, the city retaliates and throws every obstacle imaginable at him and his cohorts.

Murray succeeds in portraying New York as a city that could

drive anyone to crime. In fact, the point is driven home right at the start of the film with a clever sight gag.

"Quick Change" opens with a beautiful panoramic shot of the city, but when the camera pulls back, the audience realizes it was only a photograph on a subway billboard. As the camera continues to move, the real New York becomes visible with passed-out drunks and graffiti everywhere.

Murray, dressed as a clown, sits in the midst of this scene looking like a man who no longer cares. He stares straight ahead with a dead expression on his face and a glaze in his eyes.

From that point on, "Quick Change" involves the audience in

"Quick Change" is a subtle film, full of clever writing and plot twists that will delight most audiences — without a doubt one of the best films I have seen this summer.

an intricate plot that is guaranteed to keep anyone guessing.

"Quick Change" also stars Geena Davis ("The Accidental Tourist" for which she won an Oscar), Randy Quaid and Jason Robards.

As the plot unfolds, it becomes clear that each character serves a specific function in the film. Phyllis (Davis) is the emotional anchor, the character who gives the film human qualities that the audience can relate to. Loomis (Quaid) contributes to the overall chaos as a whining, panicky cry-baby who is as burdensome as the city. Rotzinger (Robards) adds the suspense element by relentlessly pursuing the trio to the airport.

"Quick Change" is without a doubt one of the best films I have seen this summer. Although not blockbuster material, it's incredibly enjoyable and should please most movie-goers, especially Murray fans.