

OPINION PAGE

College Life Got You Down?

By Joe Englert

Boy, am I disappointed. A couple of months ago I was debating on three options in life. One, to go to a trade school. Two, work for a living, or three, go to college.

Well, one night Betty Sue, the little woman at home, (probably having the time of her life right now) and I went to catch a movie. Unfortunately, we saw Animal House. After seeing this movie on campus life I was really set on

going to college. Just think I was going to be in a fraternity. Yeah, we would go to all the Saturday afternoon football games, me and my great frat brothers with names like Blotto, Flounder and Ottee. What was even better, I would develop into a deviant alcoholic, being involved in diurnal pranks and I would have the sex life of a hyperactive rabbit.

Believe me, there's a couple of

things that Animal House or those enthusiastic college public relations people don't tell you that I soon found out.

For instance, your racial and income background mean a lot. And your SAT scores make a helluva difference in who hits the big time. (Remember that Saturday morning you took the SAT? You got about four hours sleep after that drunken brawl you got into at the football game the night before. Remember all those little round dots you had to fill in? It looked like at any moment they would all leap off the test and strangle your little math or english deficient little throat. About an hour after the test started your discovered you had been sleeping, finding a pencil lodged in your right nostril. You looked at your paper and it resembled a chart of a San Francisco earthquake.)

A couple weeks later I got my score back and found out the only people with scores lower than mine, went to Pitt and played football there. To add to my low score I'm cursed with being a white, middle class male. (I later discovered only Eskimos and females with three breasts make Main Campus with SAT scores under 1300.) Penn State Main was

where I really wanted to go but I got a letter in the mail telling me I could go to a place called Behrend (The name reminded me of what you see on the beach in the summer when the babe in the skimpy string bikini bends over for a missed frisbee), or Dubois.

I had two choices if I wanted to go to Penn State, I could go to Behrend or some sissy french place called Dubois (Do-boys). After much debating and a visit to Erie, I chose Behrend.

Little did I know when I went on tour of the campus I was extremely faked out. First of all, when I visited, it didn't rain. The whole place was swarming with beautiful blondes (they probably decided to go to Slippery Rock or Ohio State) and for some reason nobody mentioned classes or studying. As you know, I chose Erie, Pennsylvania for schooling.

I would really like to make something clear. We never got to see the football team on Saturday afternoons, because we don't have one! The guys on my floor aren't alcoholics, they're study masters. No one on my floor is called Otter or Bluto either, but there are about ten Jims and Johns, I haven't been to a toga party; they don't even do the

worm! It is pretty hard to be a deviant alcoholic because possession of beer is an offense that is punishable by death and loss of housing, (rape and murder are lesser crimes). The myth that all college girls look like Playboy bunnies and have the morals of an Erie hooker aren't true either. That \$3.15 an hour at McDonald's looks pretty good right now.

Diana George Reviews "Menagerie"

By Diana George
Dept. of English

The best first: last week I said it would be good, and it is. The Behrend Players' production of Tennessee Williams' vintage-chestnut play, *The Glass Menagerie*, is well worth your time, and now that the freebie previews are over, your money. The intimacy of the Behrend Theater is right for this equally intimate piece of drama, in which we are admitted to the memories and mind of the narrator-cum-playwright, as he recalls his furious, poignant young manhood in an unrelentingly female world. This production made it clearer for me than ever it was before, that *The Glass Menagerie* was Tennessee Williams' artful and painful declaration-confession: Why I'm An Alcoholic Homosexual. The play is almost case history transformed into art, if you happen to buy the theory that homosexuality is a pathological response to relations with one's mother. With a mother like that, and in a completely different way, a sister like that, who could hope to develop normal relationships with women? To find out what that that means, go see the play.

Mina Eisenberg (Dysart's friend in *Equus*) plays Amanda, the aging, impoverished and deserted "Christian martyr" mother. Eisenberg regards it as "the role of a lifetime," and indeed it is. She does Amanda justice in most respects, rendering her with poignancy, fury, ridiculousness and compassion. A few scenes — on the telephone selling magazines, in conflict with her son, playing the flirt with the "gentlemen caller" — are played so beautifully by Eisenberg that they make up for what I felt was her one flaw in portrayal: she doesn't allow Amanda quite enough grace, saving or otherwise, not quite enough leftover (though greatly diminished) classiness. And it's certainly not as if Eisenberg couldn't have done that because in *Equus*, her character was pure class, with just enough compassion to make her thoroughly lovable.

Laura, the crippled sister of the narrator, who has never had a gentlemen caller before and collects glass animals instead of (and symbolic of) entering a world which will call her what she feels she is, is played with near perfection by Maryann Ronksley, who played the girl in *Equus*. Laura is a difficult character to play, because she's so ethereal that she threatens to float away to the uncluttered realm of pure principle. Maryann Ronksley keeps Laura's crippled foot on solid stage, and makes her a genuine character deserving of more complex response than pathos.

Laura's gentleman caller, Jim, is played first for laughs, and then for seriousness, by Dave McNeill, who neighed his competent way through *Equus* and bombasts his equally competent way through *Menagerie*. As Mike Simmons pointed out to me, Dave skillfully drops the character's public speaking-lesson voice when he drops Laura's favorite glass animal-as, indeed, such a character would when caught off guard. Nice, fine point. I frankly have a bit of trouble with the gentlemen caller being played so broadly, and I prefer him a little less parodic on both ends of his extreme behaviors, but that's a difference in interpretation of the character, rather than a gripe about the acting, which is consistently good.

I save Tom for last: the narrator-playwright, the controlling, creating voice of one of the most popular plays of the mid-century in America. Well, damn it, I've decided I don't much like on of the Toms, and that's not Dan Roscher's fault. That's the play's fault. We are given two Toms: the narrator, who frames the play; and the young character within the frame. When Roscher tries to render Williams' awkwardly elegant, multi-dependent clause sentences in the frame pieces that provide the narration, he's just okay. The sentences are literary rather than dramatic; they just don't lend themselves to good theater. (Maybe Olivier could do it, but he's too old now). Dan Roscher is not comfortable with those lines, and it shows, ever so slightly. But when he slips into the character of the real Tom, he is at home, and he is very good. His interactions with both Laura and Amanda are sometimes perfect. (That guy knows what it's like to fight with your mother.)

Paul Iddings has never seen a production of *Menagerie* so his direction is utterly his own. I disagree with some of Paul's directorial emphasis, as they are reflected in the character portrayals I mention above — but I agree with him on more points than not, and as always, I sense strong, sure painstaking direction of every facet of the production. Sue Klein, as student director certainly has a lot to do with the strengths of this production. The set could not be better: I am always amazed at Behrend theater sets, which, consistently, like this one by Sandy Duncan, manage the illusion of space, and skillfully manipulate the reality of closeness. You have a few more chances to catch his every good production — it's on through the 28th.

"Apocalypse Now": Important Film

By Joe Hohman

Apocalypse Now is a very different kind of movie. From the opening, sequence, with its kaleidoscopic colors and eerie Doors soundtrack, one realizes that this is not just another Vietnam movie with action and tears.

Not that action and tears are missing here; there is a lot of combat, fighting, complete with helicopters, gunboats, enemy villages, jets, napalm, blood, and thousands of oriental tras who die well. I don't recall the exact figure for the film's cost, but director-writer-producer Francis Ford Coppola must be in debt up to his eyeballs.

Also, there are many times to sit in horror as you watch what war does to a man's mind. Killing is like breathing to many of these men; after awhile they do it without thinking.

The cast is excellent. Captain Benjamin Willard, as played by Martin Sheen, is a paid government assassin who for once in his life questions whether or not to complete his mission. We know that Willard doesn't have all his bread in the oven — we see him freaking out in a Saigon hotel room in the beginning of the film — and this isn't making his decision any easier. His prey is Colonel Walter Kurtze, played by Marlon Brando. Brando is excellent as usual, but I feel guilty saying that; he is only in the movie for less than half an hour, and yet he is given top billing (and top dollar). Kurtze is a top-of-the-line field officer who has gone insane. He has divorced himself from the army, though his men follow him blindly as he sets up his own private little Kingdom.

The rest of the cast is also very good. Robert Duvall is very believable as the war-monger colonel who helps Willard and his

gunboat onto Cambodia (this is the character who states that napalm in the morning smells like victory). Albert Hall is excellent as the CPO of the gunboat who reluctantly but obediently follows Willard's orders to go deeper into Cambodia. Frederick Forrest plays "Chef," a crew member on the gunboat. Chef is really the only sane person in the entire film, and if Forrest is not nominated for best supporting actor come April, I'll be very disappointed.

Thus far I have tried not to comment on how *Apocalypse Now* seems like two separate and disjoint movies. The first two hours are devoted to images of how unorganized the war was; of how terrible the war atrocities

were; of how values were changes; and of war-torn civilians. Transitions occur at a fairly smooth pace. At all times these scenes are believable and breathtakingly realistic.

But in the last half hour, things slow down. Kurtze's kingdom is really too lavish to be believable. The final confrontation between Kurtz and Willard is mystical, like a parable or allegory. There is little real dialogue; characters have monologues. To be honest, I'm not sure if I really understood the impact the ending was meant to have.

One thing is certain: *Apocalypse Now* is an important movie if only for those first two hours. It is similar to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in that even if you don't understand it, it is amazing just for the sake of the photography. It is, in the end, like the war itself; it leaves a bad taste in your mouth, and you're not sure where that taste came from.



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