

the daily Collegian arts

'Li'l Abner' pokes fun at both Play: Of nukes and macho men

By **JUDD BLOUCH**
Daily Collegian Staff Writer
Nuclear power and macho men are the humorous targets of the musical satire "Li'l Abner," which opens tomorrow night in Schwab Auditorium.

The show, which sounds as though it were written yesterday, actually is based on Al Capp's comic strip of the same name and was written in 1958 by Norman Panama and Melvin Frank.

The story takes place in the backwoods town of Dogpatch, the home of such humorous characters as the Yokums, Earthquake McGoon and Marryin' Sam, to mention a few. The plot revolves around Dogpatch citizens' fight against their town being used as a nuclear testing site.

American values and ideas are satirized in "Li'l Abner." The first is that technology and progress are more important than a handful of people. This leads into a second and more important comment; lazy, unenergetic people, like those who live in Dogpatch, are of a

lower class because they don't conform to our values. "Dogpatch must find a reason to be there," director Louise Ammerman said, and that is no easy task.

Macho men are made fun of in the show, but this is treated with a much lighter touch. Abner Yokum is the main muscle man and owes his strength to his mother's Yokumberry tonic. Another satire, one that cuts down greed and wealth, develops from this. General Bullmoose, the chief money monger in the show, finds out about the tonic and tries to bottle it and sell it as Yoka Cola.

"Li'l Abner" is a unique musical for the University because it is being staged by the Penn State Thespians and is not a school run play. Most of the players are not theatre majors and many have only a high school background. While this detracts slightly from the professionalism, it adds immensely to the enthusiasm and personality of the show. "Generally, the level of discipline is fairly good," Ammerman said.

Thespians give non-theatre majors a chance to be involved with a major production without the pressures of a more professional show. The set, costumes and orchestra are there, but, as Ammerman put it, "It doesn't matter if you fall flat on your face." Another function of the Thespians is to get inexperienced people to participate in theatre. "We try to teach people to do things," technical director Kevin Keene said.

The Thespians have had to overcome one major handicap. "Li'l Abner" has been hampered by the absence of a set place to rehearse and has been forced to move around quite a bit. Ammerman predicted the show would have been ready in four weeks if they had been able to rehearse regularly in Schwab.

Even though "Li'l Abner" has taken double the time necessary to prepare, it is indeed ready. When the curtain rises tomorrow night, a funny but thoughtful musical will be performed. It definitely is a show worth seeing.



Photos by Sherrie Welner.



Mary Lee Bradford (left) as Daisy May Yocum and the chorus (top) of "Li'l Abner," opening tomorrow night in Schwab.

New bands appear on State College scene It's rock 'n' roll all over again around town

By **KEN FREEMAN**
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

There's some new sounds in town. It's only rock 'n' roll... and I like it! Here's a taste of some of the new State College band scene:

Eddy Viscosity Creates A Disturbance: Eddy Viscosity served a healthy dosage of R'n'R which included some Kinks, Chuck Berry, Bowie and lots 'n' lots of Stones tunes to a rollicking happy hour crowd at the Shandygaff Saloon Friday.

Playing danceable rock classics, Viscosity brings back memories of the bar bands of old. In fact, most if not all of the new bands in town evoke some sort of '60s nostalgia hook-up.

A viable source of excitement is the lead singer (I'm willing to bet his name's Eddy) whose constant Jaggeresque presence makes for the most energetic singer in town. He's got to learn to control his "Oh yeahs," though. It's comforting to know there's still a band around that plays rock and roll no holds barred. Jam on... Eddy Viscosity.

Sweet Pain Shed No Tears: How come there aren't bands like Paul Revere and The Raiders anymore? The British invasion squelched that scene long ago. You can read more about that first punk era in the June issue of Cream Magazine.

Guitarist Justin Ezzi and bassplayer Harry Warner were an offshoot of that first era as The Critters playing high school dances in the mid-late '60s.

Countless years later (and lots in between), both formed a band in State College called Sweet Pain. The group broke up a few years ago but last week Ezzi and Warner took a refurbished version of Sweet Pain to the Scorpion stage.

What Sweet Pain is today seems to be a synthesis of blues boogie, soul boogie and the first punk era.

Ezzi, a capable vocalist as well as guitarist, showed this diversity with Marvin Gaye's "Heard It Through The Grapevine," whose soul beat just happens to be one of the few original prototypes of the disco beat, Ray Charles' "Let's Go Get Stoned" and an obscure R&B Memphis boogie, "But It's All Right" by J.J. Jackson.

Warner also showed a good vocal range and a hearty knack for playing interesting bass lines. I must admit I only caught one set, but rumor has it these guys rock out pretty good too.

The Rockets From Mars Eat Textbooks And Radioactive Waste: There was once a glorious time when Tommy Wareham and The Inexplicably Stupendous Intrigues ruled happy hours at the Phyrst. That all changed, of course, some months back when

Tommy reluctantly quit because of contractual obligations with Toftrees.

This left "superbad" bassist Kenny Mathieu and drummer Rocco with the bleak prospect of forming another band that could stand up to the Intrigue tradition. Now on the other side of town were these two guitarists, Jamie Rounds and David Fox, doing the Beatles thing. They played credible renditions and nice harmonies too, but they were still just two funny looking guys on a stage. They needed substance, bass and drums, and also character; stage savvy and a back-beat.

As the legend goes, Rounds and Fox were strolling down Calder Way sometime before dawn when suddenly the butt end of an electric bass jutted out of a doorway and said, "One false move and you'll be... Rockets?"

The Rockets now are charming audiences at the Phyrst almost like The Intrigues used to. Of course, that kind of magic only happens once in a lifetime, or so says Truman Capote. The Rockets do blast off and they'll take you for a good long ride.

With these new bands sort of reviving old traditions... hey, remember how to do the frog, or the jerk... or the raggmopp?

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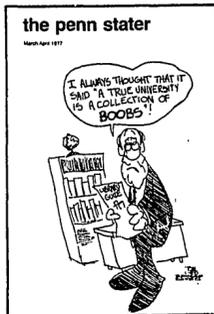
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