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Recent films are good fun:

By SHAWN ISRAEL
Collegian Staff Writer

'Strange Brew'

"Second City TV" performers Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas were told by the Canadian government back in 1980 that each episode of their show must have at least two minutes of distinctly Canadian material. The resourceful pair brainstormed and reasoned that nothing is more Canadian than back bacon, beer, touques and parkas, created Bob and Doug McKenzie, the scatterbrained but lovable hosts of "The Great White North," a sketch that won a tremendous following in the United States and Canada, and spun off a wild album in 1982 that went to number eight on the charts and earned the pair a top 20 hit single ("Take Off") and a Grammy nomination. Beauty, eh?

Now Moranis and Thomas have extended Bob and Doug's repertoire to film with



Bob and Doug McKenzie

"Strange Brew," in which the pair stars and directs. The plot of this 96-minute enterprise, filmed in "3-B" (three beers), also known as "hosorama," involves a sinister brewmeister (Max Von Sydow, of course) who plots with his yes-man henchman (Paul Dooley) to take over the world by creating a tampered beer that makes people violent when exposed to music.

Doug and Bob, like, get all mixed up in this when they try to fanagel a free case of beer out of the company for their father because they have no money to buy one. Along the way, our heroes befriend the brewery's honest new owner and a burnt-out hockey player.

All this, I'm sorry to say, is never quite as good as the beginning sequence, in which a Doug and Bob film titled "Mutants from 2051" debuts to a hostile audience. This hilarious opus features such elaborating on the effects of World War IV as, "There wasn't much for me to do, eh, 'cause, like, they blew up all the bowling alleys." Outside of the first five or so minutes there is a clever gag about special effects, a cute

scene involving doughnuts and an hilarious *deus ex machina* ending involving the Mackenzie's dog, Heshhead.

Most of "Strange Brew" is sloppily made, with continuity almost nonexistent. (The most obvious breach is that of Dooley's greasy wig and mousetail, which keeps disappearing and reappearing.) I'm a little disappointed that Moranis and Thomas, who created such memorable characters as, respectively, video disc jockey Gerry Todd and surly language instructor Angus MacGregor on "SCTV," have settled for such flimsy material.

Still, Doug and Bob (as created and performed by Moranis and Thomas) have a quirky, childlike appeal that is irresistible, and they never fail to amuse in "Strange Brew." Their absurd dialogue and superb facial wittches can produce chuckles even in the film's most awkward moments.

"Strange Brew" is hardly an auspicious filmmaking debut for Rick and Dave, or Bob and Doug. It's appeal, however, is kind of akin to that of an obscure 1935 comedy on at two in the morning. You know it's not classic comedy on the level of Laurel and Hardy or The Marx Brothers or to cite a contemporary example) Woody Allen. But it's so appealing in its absurdity you can't help but laugh anyway. Okay, eh?

'National Lampoon's Vacation'

When someone mentions the National Lampoon in the middle of crackling repartee, it is not surprising that one who knows of their work should immediately think of wild, anarchistic, often risqué humor that leaves no stone untouched and no one unscathed. Typical Lampoon humor has all the subtlety of a 16-pound bowling ball hurled by Dick Butkus and when it's good, the accuracy of tracer bullets. Such is the case of their magazines, records and, of course, their films.

Well, those wonderful guys and gals of the irreverent Lampoon have come out with their third "official" film, "National Lampoon's Vacation." It was the number one grossing film in its first three weeks of release, and is still doing strong business in most cities.

Surprisingly enough, one almost can't tell this is a National Lampoon film. There are no food fights or bathroom jokes every 30 seconds. There's only one nude scene, and it lasts about four seconds. No one even throws up. In this case, however, grossness is not synonymous with humor. "Vacation" may not be quite as nice as the real thing, but it's still a nice diversion.

Chevy Chase has never been in better form than he is here in "Vacation" as a successful food additives executive from a suburban Chicago who decides to take his wife (Beverly D'Angelo) and two kids on a two-week cross-country tour of the United States, eventually to wind up at California's Walleymore (yes, Walleymore), home of one other than every kid's favorite, Marty Moose (yes, Marty Moose).

The trip is a fiasco from the start. Chase takes his car to unscrupulous dealer Eugene Levy (another "SCTV" alum), to find out (as soon as the old one has been destroyed) that the sports car he was supposed to get is not available, and is sweet-talked into taking instead a pink-and-green station wagon.

The trip gets progressively worse. Chase and family run afoul of hostile blacks in St. Louis, get suckered by D'Angelo's sister, backwoods family into taking D'Angelo's surly aunt (Imogene Coca) and her vicious pooch with them, hole up in mosquito-infested outdoor camping grounds and take the wrong exit and demolish the car in the middle of an Arizona desert.

Although the filmmakers might have been tempted to all but frontally assault the viewer with the above material, this time the jokes are blissfully more disciplined and controlled. Director Harold Ramis and screenwriter John Hughes (who based his guttural humor on his own short story, "Vacation '83") successfully kept the reins tight, and their efforts pay off. For example, there seems to be a genuine sense of emotional balance and normalcy in Chase's family at the outset of the film, and they are easy to like as a result. Chase's performance is particularly noteworthy because he's doing a lot less mugging and preening here than he usually does, and his hege-against-hope delivery is letter-perfect. Not

'Brew,' 'Vacation' both hit comic marks

since the 1978 hit "Foul Play" has been as effectively funny.

The supporting cast fares less well. D'Angelo is okay, but she gets little else to do but play straight person to Chase. Randy Quaid is mildly amusing as D'Angelo's dimwitted brother-in-law who offers people half-consumed beers. John Candy and Frank McRae are hilarious as squeamish, stogelike Walleymore guards. Imogene Coca gets some chuckles, but in her case, Ramis and Hughes shouldn't have been so restrictive.



Chevy Chase (above) stars with Beverly D'Angelo, Imogene Coca and Christie Brinkley in "National Lampoon's Vacation."

She doesn't get much of a chance to use her superb gift for wordplay.

The movie's biggest disappointment is Christie Brinkley in her much-publicized film debut as a wispy blonde who constantly intercepts (and makes eyes at) Chase throughout the journey. Her character is pretty one-dimensional, and except for one scene in a cocktail lounge in which she perceptively sees Chase's character for the jerk he is, all she really has to do is smile, wiggle and flip her hair.

All things considered, though, "National Lampoon's Vacation" is a silly yet nicely structured treat. It's a comedy the filmmakers have wisely taken seriously and made work.

'Les Petites' is a pleasant escape

By SHAWN ISRAEL
Collegian Staff Writer

To watch Yves Persin's Swiss comedy "Les Petites Fugues (Little Escapes)" is to see a pastoral approach to filmmaking. The film, which won the Critics' Week Selection award at the 1980 Cannes Film Festival, is alternately refreshingly sunny, quiet, relaxing and even a little boring. To see the movie is to experience life at a slower pace.

Most of the 135-minute film takes place on the Duperrex farm in a large country village. The central character is Pipe (Michel Robin), a 66-year-old farmer who has served the family for over forty years. His frame is gaunt and his gait slow, and he eats his meals with the family and lives in a small room whose only prominent feature is a painting of the Matterhorn.

"Fugues" begins at a crucial point in Pipe's life. He is shown waiting for the train that will bring him the moped he purchased out of monthly payments from an old-age pension fund. After some fumbling attempts to ride the bike, Pipe begins to ride it regularly, discovering it a fine escape from the various trappings on the farm that restrict and inhibit him.

The ropes on Pipe's liberty are chiefly the members of the Duperrex family. John (Fred Personnae), the head of the household and Pipe's employer, is continually mope from increasing debts and creeping old age. Alain (Laurent Sandoz), John's son, coldly argues with his father (and everyone else) that only modernization can save the farm. Josiane (Fabienne Barraud), the Duperrex daughter, is unmarried and caring (badly, it seems) for her four-year-old son. She is also resentful of having to stay on with her parents.

Director Yersin treats most of the scenes in "Fugues" as part of a continuum, and audiences may find many sequences annoyingly incomplete at times. The ending also seems too abrupt. Yersin, however, has a fine knack for realizing the magic and charm that can come out of real life. His characters speak and act like real people.

Yersin and photographer Robert Alazarki also have developed "Fugues" beautifully in visual terms. The colors here are warm and earthy, and long, static shots nicely lend a strong sense of reality to the film. The one hazard is that like life, "Fugues" is not composed of all perfect moments. There are some wordlessly long, wordless stretches (chiefly in the film's first half hour) that contribute little or nothing to the story or the viewer's understanding of the characters.

Best in the film, however, is Michel Robin in his extraordinary performance as the elderly but buoyant farmhand. Only 51, he creates the character of Pipe flawlessly. I still find it hard to believe he is not 15 years older. Robin uses his expressive face and gaily body eloquently in presenting Pipe's alternating frustration (when he is first learning to ride the bike) and elation (as he gleefully watches a motorcycle race in a nearby village).

Asia's 'Alpha': Mass-produced generic rock

By RON YEANY
Collegian Staff Writer

"ALPHA" Asia, Geffen GHS 4088

Asia certainly knows how to mass-produce music that will appeal to almost everyone. Their debut album in the spring of 1982 made them an instant supergroup with a huge following.

That debut album was also one of 1982's best offerings in the rock world. Asia brought us such memorable classics as "Heat of the Moment," "Only Time Will Tell" and the best song of that overplayed debut, "Wildest Dreams."

But Asia seems to have forgotten that popular music can be used for more reasons than to fatten their already bulging wallets. Lyrical content with thoughts, purposes and solutions goes very well with wide-range rock.

"Alpha," Asia's second chapter on how to make best-selling albums, tells everyone that once you reach popularity, you can throw lyrical intelligence out the window. Asia is very good at what they do, but on Alpha they have made an album of generic sounds that DJs love to play and consumers love to gobble up from the record racks.

album review

And the biggest shame of Alpha's popularity is that there are hundreds of other bands who put some thought into their music and settle with selling only a handful of copies.

"Don't Cry" is the hit single here. Not only has radio been playing this one constantly, MTV and their clones and counterparts in the video-music world have been warming screens relentlessly with the video. Granted the "Don't Cry" concept clip is the best thing Asia has to offer from Alpha, enough is enough.

How about those world-wise lyrics found in "Don't Cry": "Hard Times you had before you / I knew when I first saw you / You girl you've always been mistreated, cheated / So leave it all behind you / It took so long to find you / I know that we can last forever / ever and more, more, oh / Don't Cry..."

The resulting sound is the trend in rock music today: lush harmonies crafted around a full and broad sound. Asia is one of those who sets the standards. How could they go wrong with their musical approach?

But musical craftsmanship aside, Alpha falls far short of being the intellectual album that Asia should very well be capable of doing.

Even more disgusting, when coupled with the mega-sales of Alpha, is the knowledge that many rock bands like U2 are gaining critical success but aren't making Asia-type dollars at the cash register.

Christian romance novels to hit bookstores

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Oh, David, don't you know that I love you?" His eyes widened with amazement, then joy, and his lips moved hungrily to hers. . . . This love scene from "On Wings of Love" by Elaine L. Schulte doesn't end in the bedroom, as it might in other romance novels. The book is among a new breed of "inspirational" romances with Christian overtones.

Such more-modest melodrama will become more common on bookshelves starting next February with publication of the first six in a series of romance novels from Zondervan, an evangelical Christian publisher in Grand Rapids, Mich. Silhouette Books, a division of Simon & Schuster that publishes several contemporary romance lines, also has announced its own line of inspirational romances to be released next February.

"At the last Christian Booksellers Association convention the whole word was fiction," said Ms. Schulte, of Rancho Santa Fe. Her novel of shipboard romance stays well within the Zondervan guidelines, which emphasize "love from a Christian perspective."

"For example, on potential sexual encounters, the guidelines state: 'There will be inevitable moments of sexual tension between the lead characters. Descriptions of kissing and embracing are permitted within the bounds of good taste. (But) the ability of the hero and/or heroine to observe certain limits — to prevent sexual feelings from overpowering them — is an essential distinctive of the Christian romance.'"

"On Wings of Love" makes it clear the hero and heroine part company after their kisses and don't go to bed together, the author said. Ms. Schulte previously has written an inspirational young adult book and many short stories and articles for women's magazines. Her purpose in the Christian story is not to "educate" the reader, she said, but "to open the reader's imagination to new possibilities of relating to God, to understand his forgiveness and love."

The Zondervan guidelines say all references to Christianity "should be a natural outgrowth of plot and characterization."

The novels will be "entertaining stories about wholesome people of faith," but without focusing on particular denominations or differences in beliefs, said Karen Solem, editor in chief of Silhouette's "Inspiration" series.

Do cry. . . . Asia, whose debut album was 1982's biggest seller, has fallen into the world of the sophomore jinx with Alpha (above), a musically complex and yet lyrically simple album that does not fulfill the capabilities of a talented group such as Asia. Alpha is currently surging its way toward the top of the charts while the single, "Don't Cry," seems to be doing the same.

arts

Cleo Laine and hubby Johnny Dankworth set out on tour

By MARY CAMPBELL
AP Newsfeatures Writer

Cleo Laine, with her expressive four-octave voice, and her husband, saxophonist-band leader Johnny Dankworth, are on a world tour.

Miss Laine, the only singer whose recordings have been nominated in pop, jazz and classical Grammy Awards categories, gives concerts which include pop, jazz and art songs, many with Dankworth arrangements and accompaniment.

In October, she'll star in "A Little Night Music" in Detroit, and Dankworth will conduct.

"It's just for two weeks, which is nice," she says. "You don't get sort of gray around the edges, like in a long run."

They gave concerts in America in July, in Australia in August, return to America for two and a half months. There have also been performances, with famous actors in wealthy living rooms, in scenes from Shakespeare, raising money to rebuild the Globe Theater near its original site.

Dankworth says, "I've got a gig with the Vancouver Symphony for four nights next March." She adds, "Without me," Dankworth goes on, "I didn't even inquire if she was available. I've conducted a lot of American symphonies, but only with Madam. This makes me feel independent. My liberation has come."

Miss Laine became Dankworth's big band vocalist in 1952. They were married in 1958 in their native Britain. She almost immediately went on the stage.

Her biggest acclaim has been for

Julie in the 1971 London production of "Showboat." Her first London musical since then was "Caretta" of last season, with music by Dankworth. To do it, she turned down Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Ladies" on Broadway.

Miss Laine has two new record albums, "Smilin' Through" with Dudley Moore on piano, on Finesse Records, and "One More Day," where songs tell the story of a woman's life, on DRG Records.

"In 1958 we were playing an Oxford University hall," Dankworth recalls. "The band finished and we heard someone playing piano. It turned out to be young Dud. We struck up a friendship that we've kept ever since."

"After he left school, where he trained as a counter-tenor choral singer, he worked with my band about nine months. He left to do 'Beyond the Fringe' at the Edinburgh Festival with Peter Cook, Jonathan Miller and Alan Bennett. He asked for three weeks to do it. I told him to go off, and I wouldn't hold him to the three weeks."

"After that, he did a lot of accompanying for Cleo. He's a very good jazz pianist, very original. I'm sure if he had devoted more time to it, he could have got to the top in that field."

Dankworth says history repeated itself three years ago. "He came and saw one of our concerts in Los Angeles. He wasn't doing anything. We invited him to be our guest at the London Palladium in October. He signed a contract. Then he called and told us he was offered a film and the time clashed. Knowing

the sizes of parts he had before then, we told him to get his shooting schedule changed. He couldn't. It was release him or lose a friend for life. It was '10,' which swept him into the limelight."

Miss Laine says, "That's two favors he owes us and we've only made one record." One of Dankworth's songs, "Play It Again Sam," is on Moore, "Strictly for the Birds" and "Before Love Went Out of Style." Most are standards. Dankworth plays on that record but not on "One More Day."

"The singer says, 'An English bass player, Daryl Runswick, and cyclist Kerry Crable wanted to write a cycle of songs about a woman's life and loves and breakups and friendships for an album. I was sort of the obvious one to do it. They played a couple of times I liked."

"We got down to work. I gave them ideas and rejected or accepted songs as they came along. I didn't reject many."

"The ending is hopeful. I suppose you could look at it as a woman's lib piece but it didn't set out to be. It's something both men and women can relate to. Everybody had a first love."

Next April Miss Laine will cut a second album with classical guitarist John Williams. "I'm not sure of the label," Dankworth says. "We make them first and place them later. You make the albums you want to make that way. I'm going to be on that one. It's in the contract, it's in the marriage vows. All my worldly goods and one album per year I thee endow."

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