Arts and Entertainment

Rivers' book 'deliciously dirty'

Review by Scott Harrah
Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

It's become the trend for stage performers to experiment with their literary talents. Late actor David Niven, songstress Bette Midler and professional vamp Joan Collins have all recently penned best-selling books. Now comedienne Joan Rivers, who has made a fortune ridiculing Liz Taylor's waistline and offending nearly everyone, has written the saga of a licentious Jewish tramp, "The Life and Hard Time of Heidi Abromowitz," (Delacorte Press, $8.95).

The book opens with Joan's own quote: "You show me a woman with a naturally beautiful body, and I'll show you a tramp." This statement sets the tone for the entire book — defamatory and deliciously dirty. From cover to cover, it's a witty, hilarious satire on the life of a girl devoted to the sins of the flesh. But the problem is that it may be too funny to keep readers interested.

The story starts out as Heidi cries for more spanks from the doctor in the delivery room, then inspires the discovery of penicillin. This ribald irreverence never lets up and sometimes you wish Rivers had added some serious relief to the comedy so the one-liners would be more surprising and hysterical.

The plot encompasses Heidi's days as a bimbo baby and a tarty tot to her high school harlot years and adulterous adulthood. Rivers sets up each stage of Heidi's life and gives the sordid details of her rise to professional trampdom. In each segment, there are numerous jokes about her body and her various wacky jobs like a position on the staff of "Consumer Reports" as a Vaseline analyst. All of this outrageousness is as erratic and hard to follow as it is humours. But the jokes and James Sherman's engaging illustrations make up for the empty and often sophomoric storyline.

A fabricated "Playboy" interview is the highlight of the book, but it's also the most egregious example of how Rivers failed to add much structure to the tale. One minute you'll be reading about Heidi's latest erotic escapade, then you turn the page and there's an irrelevent section about the tramp's favorite films. This book would've been more amusing if Rivers had kept it short, but she rambles on until the sexual puns become stagnant and insipid.

"Can we talk?" is Joan's most notorious saying, but can she *write*? She can, but to call this book a piece of literature would be ludicrous, as it's more like one of the comedienne's monologues than a novel. Still, Joan's first opus is filled with enough lubricious wit, sleaze and gossipy detail to make it sell. It's recommended only for those who can stomach and appreciate the offensive hilarity of Joan Rivers.

Movie's violence overdone

Hazy plot cools 'City Heat'

Review by Rachel Pred
Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

No movie could have been as bad as I expected "City Heat" to be. So, after bribing a friend to go to the movie with me — with promises of a free ticket, all the popcorn she could eat and dinner — I was prepared for the worst.

The writers collected Burt Reynolds and Clint Eastwood's best lines from past movies for the screenplay, put the lines in to a 1930s cops and thugs plot, and voila, Dirty Harry and Hooper take on the mob in a comedy-murder extravaganza.

Burt Reynolds plays a private detective who left the force to go into his own practice. Clint Eastwood was his partner and is still on the force. The two now work on different sides of the law, which accounts for the dialogue of sarcastic one-liners traded between them. They do, however, eventually team up against the dirty dealings of their opponents.

The plot is hard to follow, but it doesn't matter. The shoot-outs are easy enough to understand. Madeline Khan plays Burt Reynold's girlfriend, and portrays a rich bimbo who is really smarter than she lets on.

"City Heat" is cleverly packaged violence. It is funny, but even people being shot to death warrant a one-liner. Eastwood and Reynolds galavant their way through the murders and shoot-outs and come out smirking. As in cartoons, violence has no consequence. — loony tunes goes to Hollywood. Eastwood will sit through a brawl, watching Reynolds get beat up. Only when one of the thugs makes the mistake of causing Eastwood to spill his coffee, does he decide to get involved. To Eastwood in this scene, spilled coffee is reason for complete annihilation of the coffee-spilling thugs.

The film's bright spot is its sets — seedy diners, ritzy nightclubs and villian's hideaways. The soundtrack is good too, with a mix of old jazz tunes and bluesy piano numbers.

"City Heat" has some good ingredients — the sets, music and funny lines. The plot is hazy, however, and it lacks a good script. They just can't seem to tell a story without a lot of needless bullets.

Directors' Theatre to present plays

A children's theater production and a short play by Harold Pinter will be separate presentations of the UNL Directors' Theatre this week.

The children's theater production, "An O'Henry Holiday," follows the adventures of three hobos who are celebrating Christmas under a New York overpass. When a stranger, coughing, cold and near death, enters their festivities, the hobos keep him alive and warm by acting out three O'Henry stories.

Suitable for children 9 years and older, "An O'Henry Holiday" will be performed at the Nebraska Directors' Theatre, 1110 Q St. at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, with matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

Judith Kroeger will direct the play. The cast includes Nancy Marcy, John Stevens Berry, Reynold McKean, Annette Christman, Dan Crawford, Bob Marion and Dan Swinarski.

The Pinter play and two short revue sketches will be presented during "Late Night Pinter," to be performed at 9:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and at 8 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 16.

The work by Pinter is titled "A Kind of Alaska," and explores the sleeping sickness epidemic of 1916-17, and the results of using the wonder drug cure, L-DOPA.

The revue sketches are titled "The Black and White," and "Request Stop."

Catherine Madden, a former Nebraska Directors' Theatre board member, will direct Associate Professor of Theater Marcia Grund and theater arts graduate students Jeanne Lee and J. Christopher Wineman in the Pinter one-act.

Tickets for "Late Night Pinter" or "An O'Henry Holiday" will be available at the door. The tickets are $3 for the general public and $2 for students and senior citizens.

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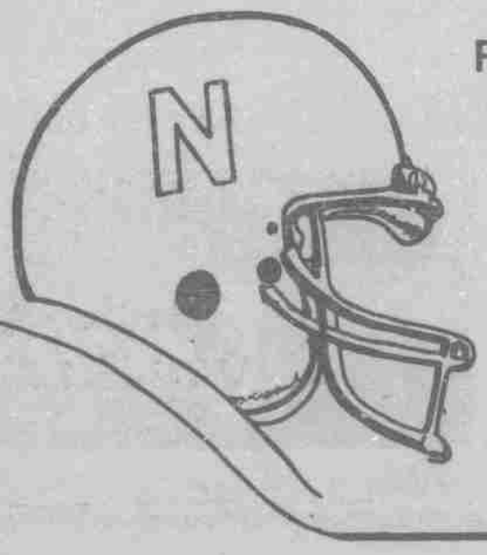

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