



Big Nurse (Jo Hill) and attendants...struggle to hold back McMurphy (Bruce Borin).

## Cuckoo hovers but misses nest

Review by Jim Gray

Often, the role of the director in modern drama is underrated. As the guiding hand of the total production, he must be a detached, objective person who can detect the flaws and foibles of a production and move to correct them. He must not be so caught up in the production itself that he cannot sit back and appraise its effectiveness.

Kosmet Klub's production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is one example of the way a generally good production can be flawed by a director involved in the production.

Bruce Borin doubles in the KK production as director and anti-hero Randle Patrick McMurphy. Because of this, he becomes an emotional part of the cast, leaving the director's chair for a firmly center-stage spot. This destroys perspective, allowing problems to creep into the production.

Make no mistake about it, however. Borin is smashing as an actor. He devastatingly blasts his way through the heavy characterized McMurphy, a robust strong-willed sane man injected into an insane asylum. Borin displays amazing versatility, varying from the strongly violent to deeply introspective, a mix that seems hard to beat in his part.

And other individual actors do singly excellent jobs in their roles. Jo Hill is exasperatingly perfect as the stereotyped Big Nurse who runs the asylum with an unyielding anesthetic hand. Underplaying seems to be the key to her success, as she deftly forces a Colgate invisible shield between herself and the rest of the cast and the audience.

Even the extremely minor characters—Steve Shelley and Glenn Cox as institutional aides and Kristy Ortman and Barb Barron as party-girl-sluts are excellent on the other pole—stereotyped, but acceptable.

It is somewhere in between the two outside groups of characters that Borin's director-actor dilemma becomes apparent—in the secondary characters. In watching the production it becomes apparent that Borin was not able to sit

in his offstage and on-stage chairs at the same time.

Places where a detached director's hand would have helped immeasurably were all-too-visible in the inmates of the asylum. Without this influence childlike Billy Bibbit (Mark Nachtigal) becomes hopelessly overdone, sputtering his stutters like a whiney Porky Pig, embarrassing the audience almost as much as himself.

Scanlon (John Murphy), Martini (Jack Mason) and Harding (Tom Chadderton) all have moments of shining glory but fail to give consistent, understandable performances or sustain well-developed characters.

And what should be the most vital and vibrant character, Chief Bromden (Lynn Lockwood), becomes stoic deadwood, ignoring the changes which must come about for him to escape the tyranny of the institution-combine.

It would be difficult to pin these character problems on the script. Dale Wasserman's adaptation of Ken Kesey's novel is, for the most part, faithful to the insane tone of the original pea-green institution. In fact, the script keeps many of Kesey's wildly clever lines intact. There is little doubt, on the other hand, that the adaptation is a well-structured play, not just an adapted novel.

The blame here lies with the direction, or rather the lack of it. A detached, objective director might have been able to detect the deficiencies in his characters. He might have been able to sustain the intensity and pace set by the well-staged fight scenes.

He might even have corrected the tones and innuendoes the cast put into the final scene which made the audience miss Kesey's original point—that the Big Nurse had been beaten; that institutions can be escaped.

But as it was, Borin was too involved as an actor, the key actor, in the drama. This factor destroyed his perspective and makes what could have been an excellent production only good.

As it is, Kosmet Klub's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is an interesting production. It's just nothing special.

Director-actor Bruce Borin...chortles during *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.



photos by Gary Hill

## Monroe commences banjo pickin' Friday

Don't forget to wash your ears during your bath this week, 'cause you'll be needing them Friday night. That's when bluegrass musician Bill Monroe and his band will give a concert beginning at 8 p.m. in the East Union.

The free concert is the last of three sponsored by the Nebraska Union Concerts Committee. The first featured blues with Muddy Waters and his band and a local blues band, Cotton. The second was jazz in the form of Herbie Hancock's band plus some local jazz musicians headed by Vic Lewis.

But don't take too long cleaning your ears or you might miss the local warm-up band, which would be a mistake. Opening the Friday show will be The Bluegrass Crusaders.

Monroe has been responsible for changing the sound of bluegrass music as well as for providing a honing ground for many of the big names of bluegrass music.

Born in Kentucky, Monroe went to Chicago in the early 1930s where he worked for about five years and formed a band with his brothers, called, naturally enough, The Monroe Brothers. Their first record was made in 1936. Later Monroe split up with his brother and formed his own band, Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys.

After working around awhile they went to Nashville and wrangled a spot in the Grand Ole Opry. Monroe had developed the mandolin into something more of a lead than a rhythm instrument, as it had been used in a lot of folk music. The sound created by it, along with his unique high tenor voice, made the group a phenomenal success.

In 1945 he hired Lester Flatt to sing lead for him. Shortly after that Earl Scruggs joined too. (At that time, of course, neither Flatt nor Scruggs had gained the fame they now have. In short, they got their starts with Monroe.)

Probably the most significant change in the bluegrass sound occurred while Scruggs was playing in Monroe's band; Scruggs' playing brought the banjo up to the status of the fiddle and mandolin as a lead instrument. Although many banjo players were heading in the same direction, Monroe gave Scruggs the chance and exposure to make his new style of playing an experience for many audiences.

Scruggs left the group in 1948. Shortly after that Flatt left, too.

In the mid-1950s the advent of rock 'n' roll in Nashville made life tough on the strictly bluegrass musician. And television, of course, meant the end of live radio, which had been Monroe's mainstay. Although Monroe continued

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recording, his records were considered too country for radio. So, although his fans continued to buy his records, money was scarce and it became tough to keep a band together.

Then two things happened which probably headed Monroe's career—and bluegrass in general—up again:

—The national "folk song revival" which began in the late 1950s.

—A revival of interest in string-band music in the mid-South.

Besides some of the musicians named above, many country and rock musicians have played in Monroe's band before moving on. Among them are such respected musicians as Vassar Clements, Byron Berline, Bill Keith, Pete Rowan and Richard Greene.

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