

## Songwriter Hall— an artist's artist

Sometimes a person is just so good at what he does that everybody can agree on that fact. Songwriters often go publicly unrecognized because many other artists score with their compositions, but they themselves don't ever quite hit it as performers. So the best recognition a songwriter can get is from his peers; the people who really know what he's working against.

Last year Tom T. Hall was voted the Songwriter of the Year by the Nashville Songwriters Association. If his new album *The Rhymer and other Five and Dimers* (Mercury SRM 1-668) is any indication, he's still rising. His performance is near the top of the pole.

Side One opens with "Ravishing Ruby," a truck stop child who, predictably, has poured a lot of hot coffee in her day. Mariachi horns spice it up. "Don't Forget the Coffee, Billy Joe" is about going to town in a snowstorm.

"Spokane Motel Blues" laments being in a motel when "I should be someplace else/like in Atlanta drinking wine, wine wine...like in Kentucky/drinking shine, shine, shine." "Looking Forward to Seeing You Again," "I Flew Over Our House Last Night" and "Another Town," although they certainly are well-done songs, aren't especially outstanding.

Side Two opens with one of the album's better songs, "Too Many Do-Goods." In it, Tom T. complains that "we got too

## bart becker bells letters

many do-goods/And not enough hard working men/Tood many hands out/And not enough lending a hand."

The side's fourth song is "Candy In the Window" and the steel guitar just jerks those sobs right out of you. "You're candy in the window/And I'm that ragged child/Who came to town to stare into/That window for awhile."

The album ends up with "Old Five and Dimers Like Me." Tom T. explains that an old five and dimer "is all I intended to be" because "Good luck and fast bucks/are too few and too far between/There's Cadillac buyers/and old five and dimers like me."

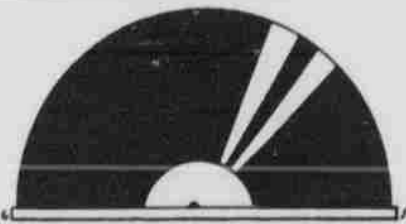
The best people in any endeavor should be admired simply for being the best. Tom T. Hall is certainly one of the elite of country music. As the last strains of the last song are fading off the records he sums up the essence of county in a spoken voice:

"You know, country people don't shine their boots very often...And they don't shine other folks' boots either. Thank you."

## blurbs

Chicano Awareness Days will be held in the Nebraska Union Thursday through Sunday. Featured entertainment will be Mariachis at 5 p.m. Saturday and at 4 p.m. Sunday. Also the Fiesta Culturala Mexicanos will begin at 7 p.m. Saturday and at 1:30 p.m. Sunday. . . . Howell Theatre's final production of the school year, *The Memorandum*, will be presented Tuesday through Saturday.

Union



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will be cancelled.

Room 237, Nebraska Union,  
Monday through Friday  
1:30-4:00

## File away *The Memorandum*

Review by Jim Gray

There are some plays that, no matter how hard people try, are just bad. Even excellent direction; beautiful functional sets; and deliberate, insightful acting can't help some plays.

Take, for instance, *The Memorandum*. Howell Theatre's last production this year wouldn't be so bad, if it weren't for a totally inane, sloppy and trying script.

The production's acting is unusually good. Steve Sheetz and Cindy Wallis give delicate performances as the wormish director and computer-brained deputy director of a corporate subdivision beset with progress pains.

Sheetz shows an interesting variety of moods, all within a well-defined, solidly-framed character. He is hindered in his portrayal by the script's shallowness, but does the most he can—an admirable struggle.

Likewise, Wallis shows amazing depth and comprehension in a labyrinth character obscured by plot. Her switches in character are all well-marked and as motivated as could be expected.

The minor characters, all blessed with boring, trivial lines, somehow all manage to come off with some expertise. Wes Devin, Roger Johnson, William Mrkvicka and D. Chetley Kincaid provide excellent stereotyped background as technicians for the immovable organization—all absurd, yet hauntingly, fetchingly understandable.

Judy Zimmerman is astoundingly good as the only semi-believable character in the bunch. As the secretary who, moved by emotion, bucks the system and finally escapes the organization she manages to climb atop the pile of muck. Minor characters Pat Bossard, Marcus Armstrong

and Rita Mines also manage some clever bits.

There are no major problems with the technical part of the show. Nancy Myers' brilliant set is, for the most part, well-lighted and properly used. Costumes, sound and coordination are adequate, if not sterling.

But all this excellence is for naught. Vaclav Havel's script centers around a plan to introduce an artificial scientific language, Ptedepe, into business memorandums. In an all-too-obvious attempt to be "relevant" and make a "statement about society" it totally ignores characters, plot, dialogue, action and nearly every other dramatic necessity.

There are no truly interesting individual scenes. The play begins, continues and ends without a noticeable change—no climaxes, no pacing...nothing. It drones on and on for what seems to be centuries.

The play seems so unbearably long at intermission that the audience is not sure whether or not the play is already finished. And it's a difficult haul to force oneself back into a seat to sit through the second half of the play.

At times, the play tried to be clever. Instead, it comes up with every hackneyed, trite comic device ever foisted upon a vaudeville audience. And dramatic attempts are even worse—most resembling the out-takes of a bad soap opera.

With a script this bad, the performance seems a total waste. After two hours and 15 minutes of this garbage, one seriously wonders why he didn't stay home and write that term paper. Entertainment it's not.

Somehow, it seems it might be better to do an excellent play moderately well than a terrible play extremely well. At least your time wouldn't be wasted.

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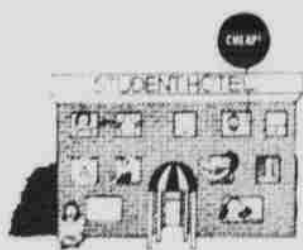
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