

# arts & entertainment



## 'Human nature' portrayal frightening in 'Rimers'

Review by Carla Engstrom

The impact a play leaves sometimes is hidden by criticism. It's the playwright's message, along with the final production effort, that is on trial. The preparation and the hours of work that go into a play are irrelevant at this point. The end result is all that matters.

What matters in the production of *The Rimers of Eldritch* is it leaves behind a trail of self-centered, omniscient and tragic characters.

The characters' lack of concern for others is frightening. And the air of desolation makes playwright Lanford Wilson's characters "a mirror of human nature," as director Rex McGraw puts it.

The production runs through Saturday at Howell Theatre.

*The Rimers of Eldritch* is a murder puzzle. The pieces of action are given in reverse order. The play takes place during spring, summer and fall. Seasonal changes are suggested by lighting, and the brief flickering of stage lights gets the changes across. The fading out and fading in of lights also allows concentration for scenes which take place simultaneously.

### Groundwork set

The director's interpretation of having the dead body on stage for the first scene (not in the original script) has little impact. But it does establish the play's ground work. And as it progresses, the realization of how Skelly (Cliff Radcliff) was murdered becomes pathetically clear.

Radcliff's characterization is brilliant. The directional and actor's interpretation of the town hermit-shutout creates a bitter, mean old man. Yet in one scene, Skelly reminisces about a past love. His recollection is humorous and lewd, which only can be the result of actor interpretation of a social outcast. He ends the scene with a tender cry of emptiness about his life.

Skelly made the audience realize outcasts probably are more honest than the rest of the town.

The set design is staged with platforms that give an insight into life in a small, former mining town. The town consists of a general store, a cafe and a church, which also serves as a courtroom. Also represented are family homes and a front porch, where women sit and gossip, or the romantically inclined kiss goodnight after a date to the drive-in.

The stage design allows the audience to see all facets of *Eldritch*. There are no set changes, which keeps the flow of action going.

### Costumes timely

The play is set in 1962 and the costumes suggest a fine representation of this period. Cora Groves, owner of the Hilltop Cafe, is played by Charly Miller. She is dressed in shell, black stretch pants that come above the ankle and a leopard-like sweater. All the costumes are representative samples like this.

Miller can build up emotion and go into a crying scene without the help of a scene that builds up to it.

Cora is having an affair with Walter (George Hansen),

but there should be more physical contact between the two. They don't touch each other like lovers.

However, in one scene where Martha (Sherri Dienstfrey) and Cora encounter each other at the general store, the cattiness and self-righteousness of the town reveals itself.

It is almost a stereotyped scene that is full of snide comments. But the pain the characters cause each other is all too human.

### Brando effect

Hansen gives a Marlon Brando effect. He keeps the thoughts of his character secret. But in the final love scene, where he is rolling on the ground with Patsy (Amy Thelander), he touches her in true macho form.

Thelander's character is the epitome of a small-town girl who wants to get out. Her characterization brings to the surface the desperation of small-town life. And the flighty way she is concerned with clothes and her future marriage makes her well worth seeing. Yet, she did not react enough in the scene where she tells Walter she is pregnant. She is not upset enough about her situation.

The Preacher and Judge Parker, played by Douglas Street, are cold and impartial characters. The preacher is part of the town's callousness.

One of his lines tells the audience that the murder is the whole town's fault. The hypocrisy of his character comes through well. But, when he gives sermons, there is not enough of fire and damnation in them.

Mary Windrod (Stephanie Kallos) is one of the outstanding characters in the play. Her voice and body move-

ments are excellent for an old woman. Her character is crazy and omniscient at the same time.

### Fists of desperation

Kallos is consistently insane, but in the scene where she tells God not to forgive the town, she should be waving her fists toward heaven in desperation.

The murder scene revolves around the misunderstanding of a struggle between Robert (Joe McNeely) and Eva (Melissa Baer).

Eva is 14 years old and Baer plays the character of an immature girl. The scene where she explains to Robert about autumn is done with child-like wonder. And when she displays anger, she does it without sophistication, like a child.

However, Robert should have defended himself, or at least put up a block to her punches a bit sooner.

McNeely's struggle with Baer was excellent. He attacked her without grace and demonstrated how foolishly people can be egged into actions they don't intend doing.

The court scene where Evelyn (Paula Langdon) collapses and cries over her misfortune of having a crippled daughter (Eva) is spellbinding. The scene is repeated several times for impact and she brought out those emotions spontaneously.

The messages of the play may be seen differently by other people, but *The Rimers of Eldritch* is well worth seeing. It brings to the surface lessons from which we can all benefit.

## Adolf Hitler's home movies included in Sheldon screening of 'Swastika'

Home movies of Adolf Hitler?

This week's presentation at the Sheldon Film Theatre is a 1975 release entitled *Swastika*.

Directed by Philippe Mora, the film intersperses German propaganda footage from the 1930's with rare home movies of Adolph Hitler; his high command; and his mistress, Eva Braun.

The home movie footage (in color) of Hitler was discovered in the U.S. National Archives, where it had been

unexamined since being captured during the war.

*The Daily Californian* critic William Bates said: "Swastika is a potpourri of curiosity items, a film equivalent of the relics and souvenirs collected by warfare buffs. But like these unpleasant items it may help us not forget."

The film will be showing at 7 and 9 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Friday and Saturday matinees will be at 3 p.m. Admission is \$2.

## 'Distant Thunder' is UPC selection

*Distant Thunder*, a 1973 film from India, will be featured this week in the Union Program Council's Foreign Film Series.

Written and directed by Satyajit Ray, the film explores the effects of war and famine on a small village.

Showings will be at 7 and 9 tonight and Tuesday.

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