

# arts/entertainment

## Absurd describes imperfections found in Altman movie

By Peg Sheldrick

Robert Altman, famous for such films as *M\*A\*S\*H*, might easily have entitled his latest opus *Mismash*.

*A Perfect Couple* is Altman's idea of a modern musical romance, the story of a businessman and a rock singer who get together through a video dating service. Altman clearly means to stand convention on its ear in taking the mismatched pair through their disjointed courtship.

The film tries so hard to be eccentric it becomes predictable, and in the end one wonders what all this noise and nonsense is supposed to prove.

### review

Are we supposed to see that Alex and Sheila are of such totally different worlds that they are at once totally the same? It takes all of five minutes to figure out that his stuffy family and her kinky rock are equally repressive and alienating.

#### Real life

Are we being offered the none-too-stunning revelation that love affairs seldom progress in real life the way they do in song and screenplay? Or is Altman just having fun with a hackneyed genre? These are the only questions the film raises, and the answers don't flatter Altman much.

The film was evidently conceived as a vehicle for Paul Dooley and Marta Heflin, both of whom impressed Altman with their performances in *A Wedding*. It's also a vehicle for the rock group, Keepin' 'Em Off the Streets. It appears that everyone was so concerned with loading up the vehicle they forgot to decide where it was going.

Paul Dooley is a familiar face to TV viewers for his many commercials and character bits. He does what he can with the role of Alex, a kind-hearted but weak-willed twerp. Marta Heflin has her hands full as Sheila.

The character's motivations defy discernment. She obviously thinks Alex is a jerk, but she seems to want a relationship with him anyway. It doesn't help that Heflin



Photo courtesy of 20th Century-Fox

Paul Dooley and Marta Heflin star in the *Perfect Couple*.

plays many of her scenes like a mannequin; large, luminous, empty eyes that tell nothing about why she tolerates and even seeks out Alex.

This more a lust story than a love story. There is nothing in the narrative that suggests any real emotional interplay between the two. Their affair, after a disastr-

ous first date, seems to consist of a few stolen kisses and the never-ending quest to consummate the relationship in spite of frequent, absurd interruptions.

Absurdity may be the key. Alex and Sheila seem to want more than sex (since the greatest absurdity of all may be that Altman thought this was worth anyone's time to make or to watch.

both have easier ways to satisfy their appetites than to pursue each other). They are both lonely and both longing for love. But their affair is absurd. It is an absurd pairing of absurd personalities from absurd worlds.

If Altman only wants to say that the pursuit of 'love' is as absurd as it is irresistible, he might just as well have kept quiet since *Annie Hall* already made the point.

#### Funny moments

The film does have its funny moments, and clearly its eccentricities are meant to charm and delight. Ironically, in one scene the decor includes a poster advertising *Welcome to L.A.*, another Altman production that used wild coincidence, some exaggerated characters, and an undertone of the absurdity of it all much more successfully.

The character's motivation defy discernment, a little made, often hilarious, ultimately pathetic. The characters in *A Perfect Couple* are very ridiculous, voluntarily victimized, sometimes laughable, and ultimately just plain weird. Something is missing here, and no account of predictable slapstick and bizarre gimmickry can make up for it.

Altman, by his title, suggests that Alex and Sheila are a "perfect couple." The question is couple of what?

The film is currently playing at the Cooper Plaza.

## Mother and son share art talent in varying styles

By Sarah Mead

The pictures and paintings of a mother and son are showing at the Haymarket Art Gallery. Ruth and Dan Lucey have a display which provides an interesting combination of talent and style.

Ruth's paintings reflect years of experience. She studied under Nebraska artists Chauncey Nelson, Dimitar Krustev, Tom Palmerton and Marie Christian.

### art review

Her paintings depict scenes from the Nebraska plains to the Colorado Rockies. Backpacking with her paints and canvas, Ruth trekked the countryside to handpick her settings. The collegian viewer may notice her works are the "looks like something hanging in my mother's living room" type; well done, conventional and formal.

Her son's work provides a contrast to his mother's painting. Primarily graphite with some acrylic washes displayed, his pictures show characters he himself would like to know. Dan acknowledges his mother's influence as being an example and environment rather than prodding. Their styles illustrate the generation between them.

Less structure, less definition, more fluidity and more imagination characterize Dan's work. His favorite subjects are characters that come alive on the page before him. Dan describes his drawing process as irregular, admitting he does not follow the conventional method of framing a face, then filling in the features.

Lacking formal training, Dan begins each character with its nose, then proceeds to create the eyes and so forth. Dan said he detaches himself from the role of creator and allows his pencil personalities their own entities.

Perhaps it is this attitude, this sort of reverence for the people and personalities of Dan's mind that attracts viewers to his work. According to the younger Lucey, the pictures are people he would want to know. The viewer also feels the urge to sit down and converse with these people on canvas.

The show will remain at the gallery during April.

## Citrus label exhibition shows design changes

An interest in lithographic art has led a Kansas City resident to collect nearly 2,000 citrus labels.

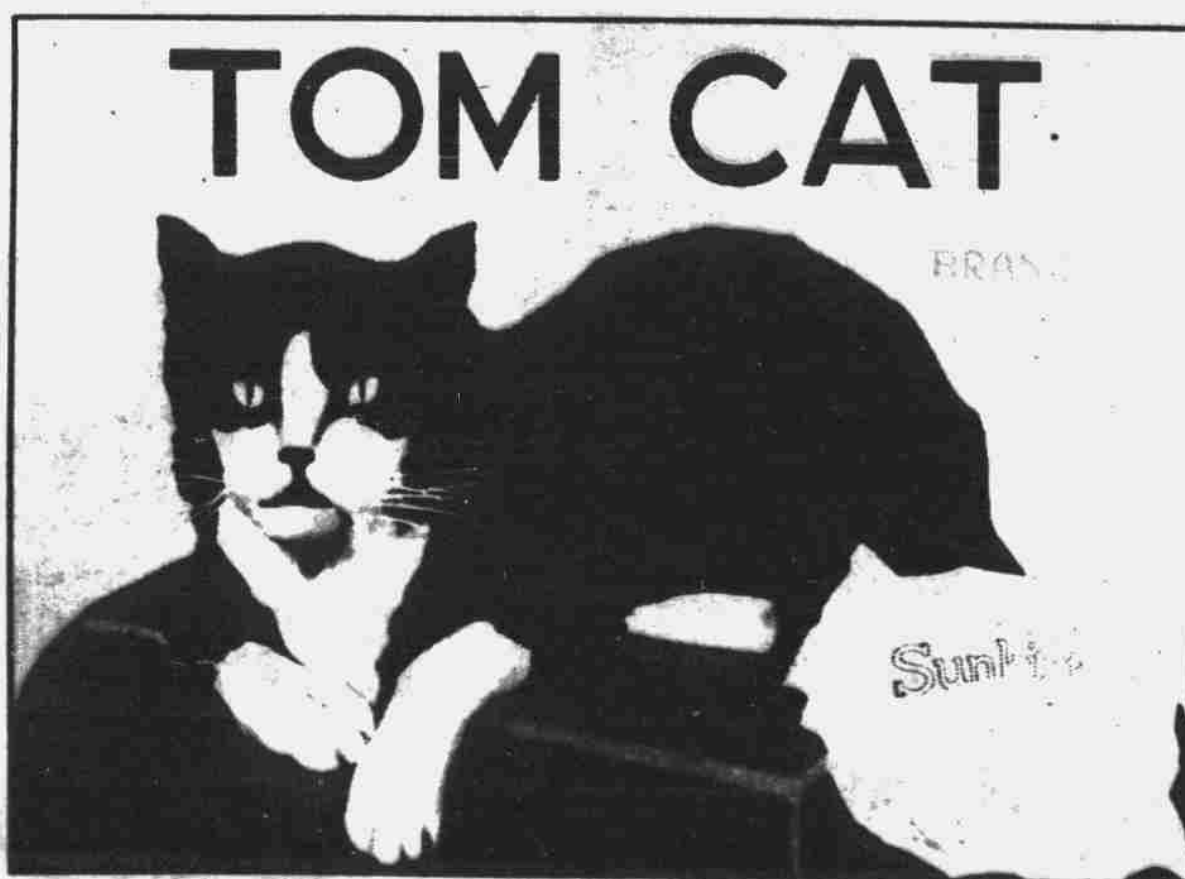
Hal Moldauer from Prairie Village, Kan., started collecting the labels as a hobby. He first saw the labels in a graphics magazine, which was running a review on the book *The Wonderful World of American Fruit Crate Art*. He sent for 15 labels at \$15.95 and began his collection.

According to Moldauer, the citrus labels have an interesting history. Citrus fruit growers in California found they needed special labeling methods to identify specific areas in the state or specific groves.

These labels were branded into the end of wooden crates before the fruit was shipped. Moldauer said eventually paper labels were adapted and during the 20s and 30s, more than 300 packing houses were in existence, each with several different labels.

Schmidt and Western were two of the largest lithographic houses in California, and with the help of sketch artists, an art director, and lettering specialist, the house was able to produce enough new crate designs to keep up with the demands.

The first labels were done in soft colors and were of children, flowers and nondescript landscapes. In 1918, it was discovered that shoppers couldn't recall brand names. Brighter colors and creative designs took the place of the previous labels. Many of the designs, such as a unicorn from California, had little to do with the citrus industry.



Orange crate furniture is usually all a poor student can afford, but the citrus labels on display at Sheldon Art Gallery this month may be beyond his price range. This Tom Cat label is valued at \$25.

Moldauer said that after reaching their peak in the 30s, the labels declined in use during the 40s and faded out completely in 1956. Unused labels were shoved away in various printers' shops when cardboard cartons took the place of wooden crates, most of which remain intact and in perfect shape.

Selling of the labels, Moldauer said,

began about two years ago and he has sold as many as \$550 worth in one month. The labels range from \$5 for more common California types such as All Year; to \$25 for Tom Cat and \$28 Barbara Worth. These colorful labels are on exhibit at the Sheldon Art Gallery until April 22. The labels are originals from the 1920s and 1930s and 28 are for sale.