

## 'Noises Off' sarcastically funny

By Geoff McMurry  
Senior Editor

"All the world's a stage, the men and women merely players."  
—William Shakespeare, "As You Like It"

Award-winning playwright Michael Frayn's demanding farce-within-a-farce, "Noises Off" is both a comedy of theatrical errors, and a character study on social role-playing, letting the audience in on the various inside jokes shared by the practitioners of live theater along the way.

The Nebraska Repertory Theatre's current production of "Noises Off," under the direction of Robert Hall, is an imaginatively winning affair, combining crackling gentle sarcasm with exacting mis-timing and slapstick physical comedy to create a farce-within-a-farce that prods the audience into wondering just what is going on, even as they're laughing about it.

"Noises Off" is about a small-time production company somewhere in England trying to stage an empty little sex farce appropri-

ately titled "Nothing On." All of "Nothing On" is set in the Brent's country home, and "Noises Off" is set amidst "Nothing On."

The play begins with the final rehearsal, where an exasperated director (Kevin Paul Hofeditz) is desperately trying to iron out the show's many last minute problems. The maid, Mrs. Clackett, played by "Dotty Otley," (played by Nicola Sheara) has problems keeping props straight, whether they're sardines or a telephone. The plots thicken when executive Roger Tramplemain, played by "Garry Lejeune" (Eric Kramer), brings his secretary, Vicki, a.k.a. "Brooke Ashton," (Julia Glander) to what he thought was his boss' vacant summer home. Instead, he encounters Mrs. Clackett (whom Garry keeps referring to as Mrs. Hackett, one of her previous roles).

Moments later, Philip and Flavia Brent, also "Frederick Blair," and "Belinda Blair," (David Landis and Susan Oltmanns) come home to hide out from the IRS, who's onto their tax scheme.

None of the characters wants anyone to know they are there, so eventually the confused maid gives in and, despite six characters wandering through the rooms to the contrary, as far as she's concerned, no one is there.

By the time the second and third acts unleash themselves, we learn there is more character juggling, sexual and otherwise, going on offstage than on. Act Two is a comic tour-de-force that barely allows for breathing between laughs.

Filling out the excellent cast is William Rhea Morgan as the dependable souse "Selsdon Mowbray," as the Burglar, Cynthia Totten as stage manager Poppy Norton-Taylor and Steve Lewis as all-around stage hand and understudy Tim Allgood.

"Noises Off" is written as a very British production and while the accents occasionally fade a bit, and some of the terminology may escape a viewer or two (though I think most of us rubes know what a Water Closet is) the overall quality level is impressive and it

See 'NOISES OFF' on 11



John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

## 'Bull Durham,' 'Roger Rabbit' top 6-month movie

Analysis by Geoff McMurry  
Senior Editor

To go along with last week's best albums of the first half of 1988 list, the Daily Nebraskan now turns its attention to movies. As with that list, this service is provided somewhat for you, the reader, but even more so for those films that would have been undeservedly forgotten by December, and the critics that would have felt guilty and ignorant about forgetting them.

Movies on the list must have been released nationally from the beginning of January to the end of June, or have reached Lincoln for the first time during that era. This actually allows enough leeway on either side to choose from a half-year lasting about eight months, but bickering over such petty details never solved anything.

"Bull Durham" practically did the impossible: it revived the sports movie from Big Game clichedom. This film took sports out of their tired genre and proved it was possible to make an imaginative and intelligent movie with a little sports in it. Also, as if there were any doubt before, Kevin Costner is now a major star.

Like he did with the first "Beverly Hills Cop," Martin Brest took the "Midnight Run" standard action/cop movie formula and pumped it so full of action, plot twists, suspense and humor that you forget it isn't some bold new revolution in cinema. Every word Dennis Farina utters in this film is startlingly funny, often just for the sheer evil of it. After seeing it, I wanted to move to Las Vegas and become a bail bondsman.

Robert Redford's "Milagro Beanfield War" turned a small ob-

scure land acquisition into an epic battle of Good vs. Evil, Innocence vs. Greed and the Lone Individual against the Corrupt Corporate System. Rich in endearing characters and bathed in warmth, Redford got performances bordering on lovable from everyone in the ensemble cast. Salsa singer Ruben Blades still managed to stand out.

With names like Steven Spielberg and Disney Studios on the same marquee, "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" seemed like a can't miss proposition, and for the most part, it didn't. Despite a central character that was often so insufferably cute as to annoy Susie Smurf, the spectacle and splendor and Bob Hoskins, were just too much to turn down. Also, unforgettable was Kathleen Turner's uncredited vocal performance as the animated temptress. Hopefully, however, the success of "Roger Rabbit" doesn't inspire a truckload of amateurishly slapped together computer animated/live action cartoon shows and cereal commercials, but that's probably wishful thinking.

The remake of "D.O.A." was an intriguing suspense thriller, despite the viewer knowing from the beginning that the hero is going to be part of the past in two days. More than that, however, it combined a rush of '80s technical gloss with a beautifully photographed film noir atmosphere, taken from the time period of the best Hollywood B-movies, when the original first appeared.

Director Steven Frears and writer Hanif Kureishi's second collaboration, "Sammy and Rosie Get Laid," is a hip, funny, flashy, frantically-paced explosion of '80s postpunk

celluloid angst. In this film, London really is burning, and while it is, Sammy and Rosie, and nearly everyone else in the cast, are living up to the title. Very politically pointed and very technically shiny.

Bringing surrealism to America's movie screens was Tim Burton's "Beetlejuice." With its bizarre situations, wild sketches and sardonic look at the afterlife, "Beetlejuice" was about as strange as it can get without lapsing into incoherence.

Penny Marshall's "Big" was a complete surprise. Treading perilously close to one of the tidiest, most overused quagmires of cliches in movies, "Big" showed itself to be a sensitive, funny, imaginative and

thought-provoking movie, making one wonder all over again why "Freaky Friday," "Like Father, Like Son," "Vice Versa," *ad nauseum* were ever made.

Dennis Hopper's long awaited and highly controversial "Colors" was a painful disappointment, albeit an engrossing one. Haskell Wexler's atmospheric cinematography, Hopper's intense direction and a strong performance from Robert Duvall overcome a reactionary, gratuitous and basically empty script. An exciting, riveting film, but it pales in comparison to an average episode of "Hill Street Blues."

Over the last couple of years, Hollywood churned out an endless

stream of Vietnam memorabilia, from gung-ho to guilt-ridden, but "Good Morning Vietnam" managed to separate itself from the pack. The main difference here is that the story was about the ordinary lives of uprooted people who had to live there, and not about the extraordinary lives of men under a hail of bullets. Also, "Good Morning Vietnam" had Robin Williams. Sure, war sucks, but that doesn't mean it can't be funny.

Honorable mention goes to "The Unbearable Lightness of Being," "Frantic," and "Hairspray." Worst movie of the year, so far, is "Casual Sex," a combination "CHiPs/Love Boat" episode without motorcycles or Charo.

## 'Evita' at the Orpheum this weekend

By William Rudolph  
Staff Reporter

Thirty-six years after she died, Evita Peron is coming to Omaha — in spirit, at least — as Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's popular rock opera plays the Orpheum Theatre this Friday and Saturday.

"Evita" chronicles the life of Eva Peron, Argentina's flamboyant first lady of the early 1950s. The former Eva Maria Duarte rose from poverty and the scandal of illegitimacy in the Pampas to scheme and charm her way into the heart of her country as wife of dictator Juan Peron. The young Eva sexually blackmailed her way into the entertainment world of 1930's Buenos Aires, "the Paris of Latin America," to become a popular radio personality and sometime film star

through one liaison after another.

Eventually Eva met the up-and-coming presidential hopeful General Juan Peron, who ushered in a Fascist regime of *descamisado*, or "shirtless ones" with "Evita," or Little Eva, at his side.

As the years passed, Evita knew almost mass worship and idol-like status as Santa Evita, savior of the poor and the terror of the rich aristocracy who had originally scorned her. Meanwhile, President Peron unleashed a totalitarian regime upon Argentina while embezzling thousands of pesetas from the treasury. At the height of her popularity, Evita suddenly succumbed to an early death from cancer at age 33 that spawned a legend embellished by the mysterious disappearance of her elaborately preserved corpse.

The musical enjoyed tremendous popularity both in London's West End, where it recently closed after a run since the late '70s, and on Broadway, where it helped launch the careers of actors Patti LuPone and Mandy Patinkin. Besides garnering seven Tony awards, "Evita" produced such worldwide hits as the song "Don't Cry For Me, Argentina" and other favorites, including "Another Suitcase in Another Hall" and "I'd Be Surprisingly Good for You." "Evita" can be considered a forerunner of other Webber/Rice hit collaborations such as "Cats" and the current smash "The Phantom of the Opera."

"Evita" opens at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 5, and continues at 2 and 7:30 p.m. Aug. 6 at the Orpheum Theatre in Omaha. Tickets are available at \$22, \$18 and \$15 by calling TIX at (402) 342-7107.