

'Companion' tells compassionate AIDS story



Sean (Mark Lamos), left, and David (Bruce Davison) enjoy a weekend at the beach with their friends in "Longtime Companion," an American Playhouse Production.

By Julie Naughton
Senior Reporter

Few filmmakers have chosen to tackle the still-controversial subject of AIDS and its effect on homosexual men. The one filmmaker who has chosen to take on the subject has

movie REVIEW

handled the subject with grace and humor, and with no apologies.

That filmmaker is screenwriter and playwright Craig Lucas, and his film is "Longtime Companion," the Sheldon Film Theater's latest offering. The film's title comes from the euphemistic term used by most newspapers to describe the lovers of deceased gay men and women.

"Longtime Companion" tells the story of a small circle of friends and the changes that occur in their lives as a result of a July 3, 1981, article in the New York Times.

That article noted the outbreak of Kaposi's sarcoma, a rare cancer, in

the gay community. Starting from July 3, 1981, the film shows how this cancer and AIDS affect these men and their friends.

"Longtime Companion" opens on Fire Island, New York. Willy (Campbell Scott), a health club worker, and his best friend John (Dermot Mulroney) are visiting their friends, David (Bruce Davison), an investor, and Sean (Mark Lamos), a TV soap writer. Willy meets Fuzzy (Stephen Caffrey), a lawyer, and begins a relationship with him.

In New York City, the audience is introduced to Howard (Patrick Cassidy), a young actor for Sean's soap, and his lover Paul (John Dossett). They live next door to Fuzzy's best friend, Lisa (Mary-Louise Parker), who works in an antique shop.

As the story passes from year to year -- from July 3, 1981, to July 19, 1989 -- each of the characters is profoundly affected by the disease, either by his own illness and death or because of the illnesses and deaths of

See LONG on 11

Other than one little slip, rock climbing great adventure

I looked up and could not even see the two ropes above me in the glare of the sun. I looked down at the person holding my ropes, a small dot about 500 feet below.

I was stuck. It was like someone had polished the side of the cliff smooth. My hands were bloody and my left shoe had fallen off several minutes



Bryan Peterson

earlier, narrowly missing the person below.

There were no handholds. My feet were just dangling in the cold air. The ropes were slippery with my blood. I yelled at my partner below, but she could not hear me in the fierce wind.

She was my belayer, responsible for keeping my ropes taut so that if I fell, I would not really fall, just bounce forward into the face of the mountain.

I thought back over the malicious

names I had recently called her like "poothead" and "boob" and hoped her anger might have subsided on the drive to South Dakota.

I sat there a few more moments, unable to do anything but spin in the wind. I thought about the book of rock climbing accidents I had read on the drive to our site: "Inexperienced 22-year-old male, climbing over difficulty level, lost grip and careened to the ground, killing two observers on impact."

The thought galvanized me and I decided to keep going. It was only about 500 yards to the top, straight up the side of a cliff with less concern for me than Muellier Tower.

Using the suction created by blood on my hands, I plastered myself against the cliff and began inching upward, staring into the cold, sheer wall and banging my exposed knees with each upward pull.

Slowly, inch by inch...

No, it was not like that at all. My Campus Rec/Outdoor Adventure Basic

See ROCKS on 10

Indescribable 'Blue Leaves' kicks off UNL theater season

By Jim Hanna
Staff Reporter

When the University of Nebraska-Lincoln theater season kicks off tonight with a production of John Guare's "The House of Blue Leaves," it may be difficult to get a grasp on just what kind of play is taking place.

"It's very, very hard to describe," said Director Paul Stegar. "It's not a realistic play and it's not representational. It's a very strange tragic comedy mix."

It's hard to blame Stegar, a visiting professor in acting and stage movement, if he has trouble describing "The House of Blue Leaves." It's not your typical night at the theater.

"It's something they (the audience) won't get a chance to see very often, because of the stylistic differences," Stegar said.

The play revolves around the character of Artie Shaughnessy, a zookeeper and frustrated hack writer of show tunes. Artie is convinced his songs will bring him fame if only he can get to Hollywood.

Artie's stymied career is exacer-

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ated by a variety of odd characters including his pathetic, demented wife Bananas, his mistress Bunny, his AWOL son Ronnie (who intends to blow up the Pope so he can get on the cover of Time magazine) and three corruptible nuns.

The play's unusual title is drawn from an experience Artie had outside of his wife's mental hospital. As he approached the hospital, Artie saw what appeared to be a tree with blue leaves. As he drew nearer, the leaves flew away and Artie real-

ized that they were merely bluebirds perched in a leafless tree.

This bleak revelation is indicative of much of the play's overall tone. While much of the play is humorous, darkness lies behind the humor, Stegar said.

"There are so many things beneath the play. It is very funny at times and yet the same things that are funny, are the saddest," he said.

This contrast is one aspect of the play that drew Stegar to it in the first place.

"I really like things to have that kind of edge. We catch ourselves laughing and then going, 'God I really shouldn't be laughing at that.' The play is really kind of relentless in that way," Stegar said.

Stegar said that the inability to describe the play is part of what

See BLUE on 10

Screaming 'Gums' radiates anti-pop plot

By Jeffrey Frey
Staff Reporter

Bless
"Gums"
Bad Taste Ltd.

Bless is a band full of energy -- disturbed energy. Even so, as unbalanced and altogether strange as this trio from Iceland is, their debut release, "Gums," has appeal.

Iceland is most famous for their babes of pop-music, the Sugarcubes. Bless sounds a great deal like the Sugarcubes without being polished or without having learned how to play their instruments prior to recording this album.

The most noted similarity between the two bands is on the tracks, "Worlds Collapse," and "Yonder." Sugarcube's lead vocalist, Bjork Guomundsdottir, is featured on these tracks and sings with a typical Sugarcubes style -- using her well-fashioned voice as a backdrop to mix with the more obnoxious and less lyrical voice of the lead singer. In this case, it's Bless lead-man Gunni Hjalmarsson.

These two songs also have a distinctive produced sound, unlike most of the album.

Bless relies on basic, gritty guitars

and wandering bass lines while the drums pound erratically -- a disconnected sound is the result.

"Gums" is a compilation of songs which are often funny as well as obnoxiously self-pitying. Much of the time the music is sloppy and neurotic -- bordering on confusion with the instruments playing against one another.



And yet, "Gums" is an album which deserves to be listened to -- at least once -- perhaps over the drone of your vacuum as you clean house. Bless makes music slightly less soothing than the noise from your typical household appliance, but does so with earnestness.

There are no happy love songs on "Gums." Vocalist Hjalmarsson creates bitter stories of love and betrayal on songs like, "The Shovel Of My Love," and, "Night Of Cheese." His lyrics often detail misguided lovers who turn on each other,

left to do strange things like cut off an arm in "Darling Dangling" to get rid of the tattoo of a girl's name.

"I have a tattoo/actually her name/across my left arm/now I guess the arm has to go."

"You Are My Radiator" is less violent, comparing a lover to a radiator which, if nothing else, is a warm companion for the cold.

Much of the time, the loosely structured music sounds like improvisation; the instruments are played furiously and at random. "Wontbother" borders on thrash with its pounding, erratic drums and bass. "Blanket" is more subdued, with Hjalmarsson's screaming vocals telling a story of: "Boy meets girl/they have nothing to talk about/girl loves countryside/boy gets sick-sick-sick seeing cows."

Formed in 1988, Bless features Hjalmarsson and Birgir Baldursson (formerly of S.H. Draumur) on vocals and drums respectively, and Ultimate Ari (formerly of Sogblettir) on bass.

Many of the songs on "Gums" sound basically the same, with only slight variations. However, Bless is a band that seems to be having fun without taking themselves too seriously, and without trying to create pop-songs which are catchy and completely likeable.



Courtesy of Bad Taste Ltd.