

'Chinoiserie' illustrates art's effect on audiences

By Sean McCarthy
Staff Reporter

Judging by audience reaction Friday night, it was not difficult to see that Ping Chong's "Chinoiserie" struck a nerve.

The West's fears and misunderstandings of Eastern culture was the core message of "Chinoiserie." The show began with a humorous tale of when Chong visited a so-called Chinese restaurant; Chong pointed out the stereotypes he said go into such a restaurant.

The show's mood quickly became darker. By the end of the performance, some audience members became unsettled as a slide was projected showing how the United States returned to China 20,000 pounds of bones from Chinese workers on the great railroad.

The world premiere of "Chinoiserie" at the Kimball Recital Hall showed how art can challenge an audience. "Chinoiserie" could have been seen as just a long condemnation of Western treatment of the Chinese people. It could also be seen as a well-performed example on how vital a role respect and communication play in understanding other cultures.

The production of "Chinoiserie" was excellent. Guy Klucsevsk composed a wonderful score, and his heavy use of chimes created a breezy flow for each of Chong's stories.

Though Chong used personal examples of racism he has encountered in the last two years, the majority of "Chinoiserie" revolved around two events in history.

The first was the first encounter between Lord George McCartney, the trade emissary from King George III of England in 1793, and Qianlong, the Celestial Emperor of China.

The second traced the origins of the Opium Wars.

The production was divided into more than 40 segments.

Though this made the production easier to follow, "Chinoiserie" was still an uneven piece. The segments featuring tensions between McCartney and Qianlong were cut abruptly to scenes depicting opium use.

The performances in "Chinoiserie" were tight, though it was the first time the show was performed in its entirety before an audience.

Whether or not people took to the intensity of Chong's piece, it was done with respect. More importantly, "Chinoiserie" stuck with audience members after the lights went up.

MUSIC REVIEWS

B.G. Knocc Out & Dresta
"Real Brothas"
Outburst/Def Jam
Grade: C

Eazy-E is gone but his memory lives on in the new gangsta rap crew B.G. Knocc Out & Dresta. Like Eazy, this duo is plagued by mediocre rhymes and tracks.

Like the title "Real Brothas" suggests, these two are actually brothers. It seems that B.G. had been working with Eazy-E on "It's On Dr. Dre 187um Killa" writing rhymes for his shortness to say.

Meanwhile, older brother Dresta, or Dre as he is frequently called ... hmmm, interesting ... was on lockdown in upstate California. This supposedly gave him time to really hone his lyrical skills.

That still remains to be seen. Although Dresta is obviously the better of the two, since B.G. approaches sounding like a B.O.N.E. rip off, there is more work that needs to be done.

This is not to say that they fall flat, just that average rhymes

coupled with played-out (did I say that?) gangsta funk equals nothing new.

You might hope for something better for these guys. Dresta toys with verbal excellence in "Jealousy" and "Life's a Puzzle."

The best production comes on the self-titled "B.G. Knocc Out" where the whining synth approaches sounding like bagpipes and the loping beat lags in the background. Too bad this track is wasted on B.G.

Probably the most shocking track is "d.p.g/k" which, in a tribute to Eazy-E's feud with Dr. Dre, is simply a dis rap aimed toward Dr. Dre, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Nate Dogg and especially Daz and Corrupt of the Dogg Pound. If the rhymes were even close to good, those multiplatinum artists might even care.

Even hard core fans of gangsta rap will quickly tire of the monotonous funk tracks with R&B chorus and less-than-excellent raps.

—Greg Schick

Showgirls

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making it to the big time.

Naturally, she doesn't make it into a big show, and instead does nude dancing at a low-class place, which includes doing lewd lapdancing for a higher price.

To keep the idea of a plot moving along, Nomi gets noticed by current headlining Vegas showgirl Cristal Connors (Gina Gershon; remember Tom Cruise's photographer girlfriend in "Cocktail?") and entertainment director Zack Carey (Kyle MacLachlan).

Gosh, will Nomi be pulled down into the cold, backstabbing lifestyles of the other Vegas personalities, or will she rise above it to claim her individuality?

Kids

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audiences' heads without them ever even knowing it.

This film focuses on one day's adventures with Telly (played by Leo Fitzpatrick), his best friend Casper (played by Justin Pierce) and Telly's former girlfriend Jenny (played by Chloe Sevigny).

Nearly every character in this film, with the exception of Jenny, is virtually facing moral bankruptcy.

Telly is an HIV-positive high school student who has made a hobby of deflowering virgins, preferably those who are around the ripe age of 13.

Casper is an alcoholic, homophobic, drug-using skateboard punk who shoplifts on a daily basis

Who cares? As far as a story goes, this movie sucks. We have more than two hours to learn one thing: Lots of show business people have the ethics and conscience of clam dip.

The acting in this film is pretty deplorable as well, with Berkley standing out proudly as the leader of this gang of overacting twits.

The only saving graces of this movie are the music and dance sequences. The choreography and music in this film blend together with a passion and power that has to be experienced to be believed.

But it's not playing in Lincoln. So is it worth an hour's drive to see? Probably not.

Is it worth renting once it comes out on video? Maybe, but the scale of the show will be lost on a small screen.

and marvels at Telly's ability to manipulate members of the opposite sex.

Jenny, the only character that shows signs of redemption, finds out that she is HIV-positive and spends the rest of the film trying to find Telly and deal with her own emotions at the same time.

By the time the final scene is played out, and Telly's voice-over regarding his philosophy on life is spoken, the film has done its damage and revealed its message many times over — even though no one in the audience may know it.

"Kids" is one of this year's most powerful and realistic films. From the acting to the writing to the directing, every aspect of the film hits with full force. And if you don't think that you can handle that, then you're exactly the person who needs to see this film.



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NC-17

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"Showgirls." Gina Miller, assistant manager at the Dundee, said moviegoers should be allowed to watch what they want to watch.

"Censorship is a bad thing," Miller said. "It's just wrong to want to censor movies for everybody."

Although both positive and negative responses have come to the employees of the Dundee over various NC-17 movies, Miller said the majority had been favorable.

Steve Herrley, manager of the Dundee, agreed.

"We've gotten a lot of positive comments about running this movie," Herrley said. "As far as negative comments go, I myself have not heard any."

There haven't been too many problems with enforcement of the NC-17 rating, Herrley said.

"We've had to turn away a few kids who have tried to get in," Herrley said. "I had one kid who tried to tell me his driver's license said '1975' when it was really '1979.'"

"They (moviegoers) are pretty understanding. A lot of people are just happy that the movie is showing here."

Enforcement of the NC-17 rating didn't go so well at the AMC 8 Westroads Theaters. Manager Jenny Rands said the crowd was fairly calm, but tense.

"The big thing was that we had to card everyone," she said, "and a few just got real snotty about it."

Rands said she didn't anticipate any further problems except possibly on the weekends.

"It takes awhile for people to get in," she said.

Employees at the AMC Westroads 8 also had their share of opinions about the NC-17 rating and the release of "Showgirls."

"I've never seen so many men in one theater at one time," said Heidi Juersvich, 18.

"A lot of the older crowd is kind of flattered when we ask to see their ID," said Amanda Blake, 20, "but a lot of people just think it's ridiculous."

A rating such as NC-17 does not allow for mistakes on judgment calls on a person's age, Blake said, and she isn't doing her job if someone who isn't 17 years old gets into the theater.

"If we card them all, then we won't miss anyone," Blake said.

One employee said he found the new person-to-person relationship refreshing.

"I'm more in touch with these people now because I'm talking to each one of them," said Nate Aguilar, 16.

But Aguilar said he wished he hadn't talked to so many people.

"It is a pretty sad comment on society that we almost sold out."

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