

arts

Easy Adaptation

Adaptation
by Elaine May
Mask and Bauble
Midnight Theatre
Friday & Saturday Nights

Elaine May reinforced her comedic genius for parody with her creation of the insanely funny play, *Adaptation*.

In the hands of Mask and Bauble as a midnight theater offering, the play is given a reasonably competent and amusing production, however, one which is marred by frequently incomplete or underdeveloped humor.

It may seem petty to take to task a comedy production which is greatly laughed at by an audience. But in this case it is not, not when one considers the ingredients of the comedy and weighs them with the taste of the final dish.

First and most impressive is the script. It is a gem both in its concept (based upon a TV game show where a man grows from infancy to death) and its execution (which is speeded along by polished jokes). Next, as is habit with M&B shows, the technical production is outstanding.

It is only in the interpretation of May's script by director Aaron

Daniel Ostroff and the four-member cast that fault may be found.

Many critics and writers will insist that comedy is more difficult to perform than tragedy. This is imprecise. It is relatively easy to perform stage comedy, to evoke laughter, particularly when the script is so fine and the cast can reach the lines. However, it is an elusive, demanding task to produce comedy which flows smoothly with waxing and waning rhythm, still producing the belly-aching laughter.

In the game of *Adaptation*, Phil Benson is the *Everyman*-contestant. He is hosted by the Gamesmaster, and assisted in his gamesplaying by a male and female player.

As Benson, Bob Higgins is effective enough as he is sped through his life's contest, manipulated by the twisting fates and left a pathetic and common character by the play's end. He does show a marvelous versatility as he moves through various stages of maturity, although he fails to evolve his character physically.

As the gamesmaster, Jim Glassen is wonderfully plastic, particularly when he'll echo the Bob Barkers of the world with his



Jim Glassen

saccharin congeniality. If his delivery was a little more fluid, a position on "Let's Make a Deal" would be guaranteed.

Catherine Lyon and Gerry Dempsey are players of uneven distinction and show little aging (as the roles require the portrayal of numerous people).

Together the cast is funny, but there is not enough electricity to set off a chain reaction of laughter which could do justice to the May concept. The show lacks a comedic cohesiveness which would enable it to be not just good, but perhaps great.—*Rod Kuckro*

Raised on Robbery

Over 14,000 Joni Mitchell fans were sittin' up waitin' for their sugar to show. And they were going through hell at Cole Fieldhouse in the process, for they were subjected to the screech of the LA Express.

But that was to prove to be the lesser of two gross evils. One evil is forgiveable—the LA Express having no talent; the other is not—Joni Mitchell pulling a "now you see me, now you don't" act because of what the official spokesman termed "illness."

The LA Express' appearance might have been more bearable if Mitchell had indeed played. But their monotonous excuse for rhythm and blues (they are now without the help of Tom Scott) was more than a human ear could suffer. If you want a firsthand rundown on their performance, pick up their new album because my recounting it will be none too kind.

The most glaring occurrence of last Sunday evening concerned the appearance of Ms. Mitchell herself, or more precisely the brevity of it. If you haven't heard, here's the instant replay.

After a twenty minute set change, Joni Mitchell glided onto the stage draped in a black

pantsuit and bolero hat. She looked quite the fox. After striking the opening chord of "Help Me" she leapt into the tune with a vigor mirrored in her recordings. Suddenly, there seemed to be a problem. She had turned her back to the buoyant audience and was shaking her head at the LA Express, who were backing her up. One noticed it was impossible to hear her guitar. She was irritated, pissed off. There was no mistaking her feeling. She was being drowned out. At the last note, she threw down her guitar and stalked off.

Her manager appeared and said "due to technical problems" she'd be back in five. Twenty minutes later he returned. Joni had "stomach cramps, a touch of the flu and was troubled keeping her dinner down." It was 10:30 p.m.

After checking with some stagehands and some people from Cole Productions, I was told that she was not, in fact, ill, but really pissed, both at the band and the stage set-up.

The next night she played New Haven; without even a cough.

Obediently, the child-like audience filed out. Hell, some people will probably send her get-well cards.—*Rod Kuckro*

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