

Local film fest opens with controversy

By SUSAN NOWAK
Times-Standard Writer

ARCATA — The Humboldt Film Festival, plagued by a couple of complaining judges, features films that lack "soul" and are "cold, very, very cold," at least according to one of the judges.

The festival, which began May 2 and runs through May 17, officially opened Monday at a press conference and reception at HSU hosted by festival organizers.

In an ungracious display, filmmaker Christine Choy, one of the judges, complained about the festival entries, her pay for being a

Commentary

judge, film schools and the what she judged to be a lack of professionalism surrounding the student-run festival.

Some of the students hurled back criticisms at Choy, who indicated she might not show her films during the fest — something that is expected of each judge. The whole sorry event included Choy and a TV newsman calling one another racists.

Choy effectively upstaged the opening of the film festival because she dominated the discussion and little else of substance was said. Joining her with criticisms of the 19th annual festival was Judge Michael Rudnick, an experimental filmmaker.

Choy criticized the films she had seen May 3 and 4 as lacking warmth but either wouldn't or couldn't explain how filmmakers can give a movie warmth or "soul."

The films are submitted from throughout the world. At least three of the movies competing were made by HSU students, a festival spokeswoman said.

Judges can award up to a total of \$1,800 to any of the films.

Judge Lucy Ostrander of Seattle is the festival's "visiting artist." She was quiet most of the time but jumped to the defense of film schools, which Choy and Rudnick agreed are unnecessary.

Ostrander is a documentary filmmaker. "Witness to Revolution," her account of the life of American journalist Anna Louise Strong, has been aired on PBS.

To complete "Witness to Revolution" for her master's thesis, Ostrander traveled to China to research and look for footage of Strong, a friend of Mao Tse-tung.

"Witness to Revolution" won a student Academy Award.

Ostrander defended film schools when Choy said learning the basics about filmmaking is relatively easy and can be gained from a book on one's own.

"I learned by doing," Ostrander admitted, but she got the chance for hands-on experience as an undergraduate at UC Santa Cruz and



Michael Rudnick is a Humboldt Film Festival judge

as a graduate student at Stanford University.

Choy said if she had \$10,000 to spend on film school, she would rather use it on making a movie.

"I didn't learn film at film school," Rudnick said. "I'm basically self-taught."

However, Rudnick did receive degrees from the San Francisco Art Institute and was a visiting lecturer at UC Davis. A filmmaker since 1971, he has produced 27 films that have been screened at more than 70 theaters, festivals, museums and universities.

Choy, who has made about 17 films since 1974, lives in New York City.

Choy apparently came with expectation of a glittery film fest replete with limousine service, said. She and Rudnick agreed the festival was not hosted on grand enough scale to suit them.

Rudnick complained that the festival will only be shown at HSU.

"Why not take these films show them at a theater around town?" he asked. His question apparently was rhetorical since he showed no interest in a student response that North Coast residents are willing to come to the campus for entertainment and art.

"I don't think (the film festival) going to excite the general public," Rudnick said, "because I've run a festival myself and I believe it's really important that if you do a festival you kind of have to stick your neck out" to make it exciting.

After the judges are done, "Best of the Fest" evenings will be held. Judges' favorites will be shown Monday and "people's choice" films will be run Saturday. Screenings begin 8 p.m. in Gist Hall. Admission is \$2.

Those programs will be repeated May 16 and 17 in a location to be announced (see After Five Edition listing next week). The films will be shown at 8 p.m. and admission is \$2.

Auditions slated for PAC comedies

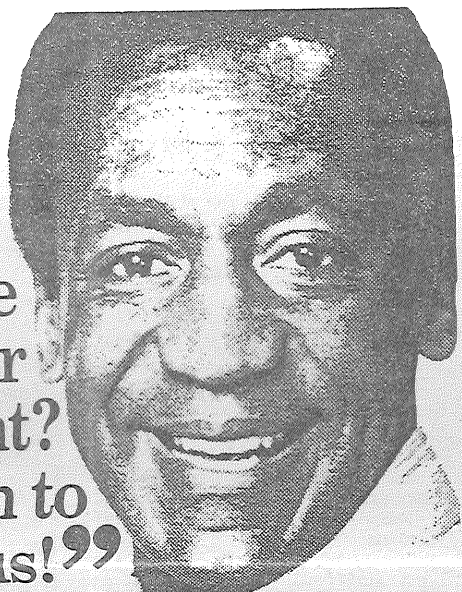
ARCATA — Auditions for a century boulevard comedy are for Sunday and Monday at 7 p.m. at the Pacific Art Center.

Roles for five women and men ranging in age from about 18 to 50 are available for "A Flea in the Ear," Georges Feydeau's farce opens July 11 and plays Thursday and Saturday nights through Aug. 2. There will be two Saturday matinees. Rehearsals start later this month.

Auditions will be held at the theater at Ninth and L streets, and consist of readings from the play. A few copies of the script are available at the theater. They may be checked out for up to three days if a \$100 refundable deposit is made.

For more information, call 838-2828.

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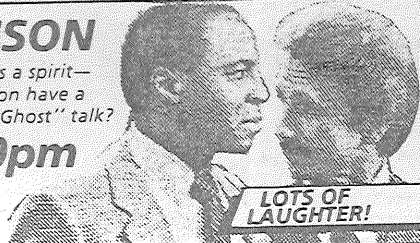


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Bruce Munn and Melody Thrash will sing Friday in Old Town with a choral group.

Photos by Chas Metivier

Children's Chorus to perform Friday

EUREKA — Choral music will be sung by children Friday at 8:15 p.m. at the Humboldt Cultural Center.

The Redwood Coast Children's Chorus, directed by Kathe Lyth, will perform classic and folk songs at the latest in the Concerts in Old Town Series at 422 First St., Eureka.

The 45 members of the chorus are divided into four groups, each meeting twice weekly after school. The beginning choruses range in ages from five to eight. The intermediate and advanced choruses have children ages 8 to 13.

Now in its eighth year, the chorus provides its members with concert-level performance opportunities, but emphasizes Kodaly training — a process of ear training, sight singing, solfege and vocal technique.

Lyth, a Kodaly specialist, the success of the Redwood Children's Chorus to continuing toward the perfect in and diction and carefully compositions.

Tickets for the show general, \$2 students and seniors are available at the door. Doors open at 7:30.

Dinner theater delights despite disasters

By JUDY BACCHETTI
Guest Reviewer

EUREKA — A few near disasters, including a time when the set almost fell down, did not manage to diminish the enjoyment found Friday at the Eagle House dinner-theater production of "Murder at Howard Johnson's."

A night of dining and drama wrapped in one package makes for a delightful evening at the Eagle House. The food is delicious and the drama deliciously funny.

Despite the potential disasters surrounding the self-destructing set, the Ron Clark and Sam Bobrick play lighted the hearts of all and filled the theater with laughter.

Theatergoers no longer need to rush through dinner or risk the chance of not getting waited upon in time to make it to the theater before the curtain goes up. In this setting, it is all right there for you.

The chef and his staff prepared a beautiful buffet dinner with "baron of beef" served rare or well done. The "salmon en croute" was a treat to the taste buds.

The table was dressed with watermelon carvings, flowers and vegetable sculptures to enhance this evening of art. Also served was an array of vegetables and salads, including stuffed baked potatoes.

To top off the meal, the chef personally served a surprise dessert, a four-layered frozen delight.

The play began at 8:15 p.m. and no

one seemed to be rushed to finish their meal.

The play itself was so funny that many of the actors' flaws, such as sticking a hand or head through a window that was supposed to be closed, just blended in.

Ken McClure played Paul Miller, a betrayed husband and car salesman. McClure's experience in acting was obvious and strengthened the production.

McClure was much more convincing than J Warren Hockaday, who played Mitchell Lovell, a dentist who steals Miller's wife away. This being Hockaday's local debut could account for his overacting, at first. He seemed a little more natural and at ease in the second and third acts. I'm looking forward to seeing more of him.

Miki Welling Smith played Arlene, Miller's wife and accomplice in this mysterious triangle. She attracted not only these two gentlemen, but also the audience.

The disasters came when part of the set almost fell down. The hammering during the intermission put a slight edge on the mood that had been carefully prepared.

When the play began the mood was restored, but a picture fell from the wall, yet another distraction. A curtain in the upper balcony was opened periodically, shining light onto the audience and providing yet another distraction.

I am sure the technical problems

will be dealt with by the next performance and nothing will stop the audience from having a truly enjoyable evening.

Director Daniel R. Coffman and House Manager Laura Coffman must be thanked for offering to the public the dual delight of dining and drama, which make for a fine social and cultural experience.

As long as the food, the plays and the performances remain top quality, I see a wonderful potential of excellent entertainment for our community at the Eagle House.

"Murder at Howard Johnson's" will not be offered this weekend, but continues May 16-17 and 23-24. For ticket information, call 444-8001. (Editor's note: The Eagle House recently was forced to close because of building-code violations. At press time it was unclear if the establishment would be open in time for the remainder of the dinner-theater run.)

Bacchetti was born and raised in Humboldt County. She teaches reading at Eureka Nazarene School and is majoring in English at Humboldt State University. Her interest


in and appreciation for the theater began when she was in high school, 25 years ago. She and her husband, Fred, have four children and one grandchild.

Perry Mason returns

HOLLYWOOD (UPI) — Raymond Burr returns to his role as Perry Mason in a two-hour NBC-TV movie, starring in "Perry Mason: The Case of the Notorious Nun" with an all-star cast. The cast will include William Katt, Arthur Hill, Barbara Parkins, Timothy Bottoms, David Ogden Stiers and Tom Bosley. Barbara Hale will play Della Street, Mason's secretary. Michele Greene plays the role of a young nun accused of murdering a priest with whom it is suspected she was romantically involved.



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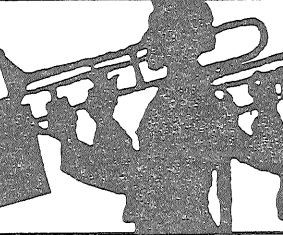
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