

PRC play portrays marriage

By ANN SMALLWOOD
Staff Writer

Playmakers Repertory Company's latest production, its annual spring offering of a lighthearted comedy, is Jan de Harlog's 1951 favorite *The Fourposter*.
Although the performance heralds the new season with all the polished, professional pizzazz we have come to expect from this UNC-sponsored Actor's Equity company, the play itself seems an awfully outdated and shallow offering to present to a university community.
The Fourposter chronicles 35 years of a predictably funny and poignant marriage in a series of two-character vignettes set in an upper-class couple's bedroom, in and around their four-poster bed — quintessential dinner theater fare.
The actors keep up a brisk pace within the scenes (there are six), but the frequent breaks needed for the actors to go offstage and age property make the production seem to drag.

The play's humor is based on that ever-popular theme of sex-role differences, or the respective (and complementary) foibles of man- and woman-kind. All that stuff that makes marriage seem so wonderful — when you look BACK on it.
The Fourposter opens with the couple's 1890 wedding night, when the characters must indulge in the unbearable Victorian coyness involved in undressing in front of the first member of the opposite sex they've been alone with.
Then, there is the dreadfully CUTE way that the actors (especially the flighty blonde wife) recite their lines: "Michael! Please don't look at me so creep-ill-lee!" Or those familiar aristocratic truisms: "Quiet dahling, the suhrvants will hear!"
As the marriage moves on, we see the couple cheat, fight, kiss and make up. Later they worry about their wayward teen-agers, face their mid-life crises, and finally leave their home (and fourposter) to grow old together.
The actors (Jeanne Cullen and Samuel Maupin) handle their roles and age transitions well, and

Peter Bennett provides some inspired direction, but the play still seems rather old and tired. As the husband so aptly observes in the last scene, "Everything we've said here this morning, we've said before."
Yes, yes. It's all been said. Even the wife tries to say it in some of her last lines: "I wanted to leave... a message... that marriage is a good thing."
See how delightful this play is? Just as delightful as on its opening in New York 30 years ago, but more dated. At least I would like to hope marriage has changed since then — that today a woman wouldn't load down her paunchy husband with four suitcases and a steamer trunk while she blithely fiddles with her little clutch bag, or that a father-to-be wouldn't say things like, "I'll take him fishing, IF it's a boy." Bah. I don't think members of my generation find those things funny.
Even so, ever the unbiased reporter, I asked some people leaving the theater with me what they thought about the play. Did they really like it?
"Why yes," said the white-haired lady in front

of me. "I enjoyed every minute of it. It was delightful. Simply lovely. Those young people spoke so clearly I could understand every word!"
But the student behind me was less enthusiastic. "Oh, I guess it was all right. It was funny. I kept thinking about all the laundry I had to do, though. I didn't expect it to be so LONG."
So gauge for yourself.
If you think the world's greatest comedian is Bob Hope, or that the world's greatest singing group is Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, of if you subscribe to a daily newspaper just so you can catch the latest hilarity in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Dagwood Bumstead, this is a play you MUST see. If not, just go do your laundry and wait for PRC's April production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
Performances of *The Fourposter* are at 8 p.m. daily, except Mondays. And there are matinees at 2 p.m. Sundays. The play runs through April 5. For more information call 933-1121.

Film features losers

By NISSEN RITTER
Staff Writer

Nothing goes right for Sally Field and Tommy Lee Jones in *Back Roads*, a light comedy directed by Martin Ritt.
Field plays Amy Post, a prostitute who makes no excuses for her profession. "It's what I do best," she reminds anyone who asks. Still, Post wants to quit walking the streets of Mobile, Ala., and start doing manicures in Los Angeles.
Jones is the unemployed, ex-fighter Elmor Pratt. Despite an unsuccessful boxing career, Pratt still is waiting for a comeback. But as Post tells him, he is a loser; it is what he does best.
After Pratt hits a policeman, he and Post decide that it is time to pack their bags and leave Mobile for Los Angeles.
On the way to California, they live up to their reputations as losers. Every time something goes right, something else goes wrong.
A sailor offers the couple a free ride to the West Coast but takes off after realizing that Post is a prostitute. Later, Pratt wins

\$100 in a fight only to lose it to the local bad guys.
Finally, the credits begin to roll over Post and Pratt happily hitchhiking west, at peace with their bad luck.
In *Back Roads*, Field and Jones make fairly successful transitions from realistic films, *Norma Rae* and *Coalminer's Daughter*, to light comedy.
Field demonstrates her great comic ability in the film by bumbling — in a tight skirt and high heels — through mud puddles, highway traffic and the back end of a junk truck.
Though Jones does little more than fight with strangers and drink beer, he plays the part of a losing boxer with finesse.
Only Martin Ritt, the director, seems reluctant to admit that *Back Roads* is a light comedy. Ritt throws in a realistic situation that does not fit, detracting from the silly, amusing quality of the film.
Before Post leaves Mobile, she stops by a schoolyard to see her son, whom she gave up for adoption. The camera focuses



Sally Field travels west ... portrays perpetual loser

on the schoolyard fence which separates mother and son and causes Post to cry. But suddenly Ritt drops the issue.
Later scenes verge more on slapstick than drama. Field and Jones chase dollar bills in heavy traffic and perform other Laurel and Hardy antics.
At the end of the film, a pimp symbolically burns a letter which Post has written to her son. While Post cries, the pimp absurdly lectures her on what is best for the child.
Perhaps Ritt is attempting to shock the audience into reality. But it doesn't work. *Back Roads* would have been better off if it had remained lighthearted instead of floundering between the frivolous and the mawkishly serious.

McCarty's music exciting, distinctive

By PETER BRADY
Staff Writer

Just as faith in rock and roll is beginning to dwindle, an artist comes along who combines vocal distinction, musical intelligence and public accessibility.
His name is Patrick McCarty, and his music manages to bypass the creative dead end that so many of today's new wave rock bands have run into.
"I think rock and roll was intended to be, above all, exciting. That doesn't mean loud, that doesn't mean simple or pretentious," McCarty said. "But if that excitement is there, then it's up to the artist to make the music intelligent. A musician owes it to his audience. Listeners deserve lyrics that make sense, not just gibberish."
Patrick McCarty comes from Richmond, Va., where he always has had a strong following for his bands. He is a singer, guitarist and songwriter backed by an energetic rhythm section. His music is getting airplay on many North Carolina radio stations (including WXYC), and listener response has been good, as it has been in cities like Washington, D.C., and New Orleans.
While so many voices in rock today fall into the "I've heard that before" slot, McCarty's voice defies categorization; it simply knocks you out. His guitar work is fresh and his instrumenta-

tions and arrangements are exciting. Above all, McCarty's songs are memorable — and in that they are already a cut above the bulk of recent rock releases.
Most of his tunes are rich with catchy hooks and finger-popping beats — and they stay in your mind (listen to "Where There's Smoke"). Lyrically, his songs are strong and accessible to the rock-and-roll masses.

"Audiences are no longer looking for trends, so to speak," McCarty said. "They're looking for something new and different. I hope I can offer them that."
An album by McCarty is coming. When released, he is sure to follow it with a tour touching down in North Carolina. By all means go see him live — he's hot. If you hear Patrick McCarty once, you will surely want to hear him again.

Ervin describes Watergate with clarity

By WILLIAM PESCHEL
Staff Writer

Sam Ervin's book *The Whole Truth: The Watergate Conspiracy* is unique. Appearing seven years after Nixon's resignation, it is one of the few books written on the subject by a major figure who wasn't convicted or implicated in the scandal. *The Whole Truth* is also unique in being a readable recounting of the final report by the U.S. Senate committee that investigated Watergate. And, the book was written completely by Ervin, a rarity in the age of the ghost-writer.
For those of us who were too young to remember, the former senator reminds us what Watergate is: the improper, illegal and unethical efforts by Nixon aides and the Committee to Re-Elect the President.
The rest of the book is a chronological history of that time, relying solely on testimony given before the committee, contemporary press clippings, and the Nixon tapes. Ervin the senator appears throughout the book, quoted from testimony and news stories. In this way, Ervin lets the story tell itself, but he steps in at times to refute Nixon's constitutional arguments. "The President is the servant of the Constitution and not its master," he writes. "There is nothing explicit or implicit in that instrument which exempts him from a duty the law imposes on all competent human beings in our land."
The Whole Truth continues this way for 320 pages, with occasional tangents about Nixon's campaign spending, alternate plans for disrupting the Democrats (with such names as "Sedan Chair II") and the resignation and pardon. Ervin's style is definitely that of a Senator: fellow congressmen and staff members are "courageous and forthright," and "stalwart," or "rendered faithful service," and "earned my enduring gratitude." Not a word is written against a fellow senator, nor even a Republican.
In the end, Nixon is allowed to hang himself. Ervin writes of the ex-president's crimes with an eye toward history, answering

the charge in Nixon's *Memoirs* that he was driven from the presidency by a hostile press and vindictive partisans.
The former Senator lists the actions of CREEP to obstruct justice: perjury, offering "hush money" to the Watergate burglars, destroying records, intimidating White House and Creep employees and putting pressure on the Justice Department and the FBI to halt the investigation.
None of this is new, but I can recall no other book that describes Watergate with such clarity and simplicity. It is a necessary book on what — tragically — already has become an almost forgotten subject.

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DOONESBURY by Garry Trudeau

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AS KROONTRICK, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE GOVERNMENT IN EL SALVADOR TODAY?

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