

Simon's latest fatally flawed

By PETER MCCARUS

NEIL SIMON'S *Murder By Death* was a successful burlesque of murder mysteries, successful partly because it set up so many great one-liners so well. His latest effort, *The Goodbye Girl*, is a love story, unconvincing partly because it tries to squeeze out too many clever cracks at the wrong times.

The sense that Simon has gone overboard trying to get laughs is present from the opening scene. A divorced Broadway dancer (Marsha Mason) and her overly clever daughter Lucy return to their apartment to find that Mom's boyfriend/roommate has left for Italy.

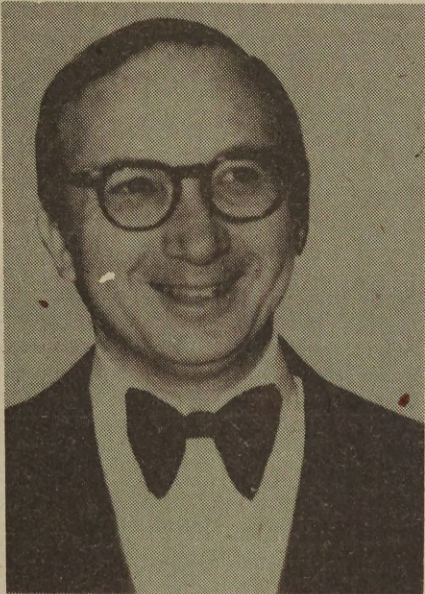
Having read the goodbye letter, Mason sits crying as little Lucy reads it aloud for our benefit, making cute comments. Another little girl might have been concerned with her mother's misery, but the possibility is held offstage long enough to let Lucy say just the cutest things, and to make us wonder if we are to take Mason's portrayal of a forlorn woman really seriously. It is good to have a brat around in a movie to relieve situations that seem to get too heavy, but Simon goes too far when he forces a ten-year-old to be saucily sophisticated through jealousy, confusion, boredom, etc.

The story has a lot going for it, despite its faults. The boyfriend, having hightailed it to Italy, has also subtlet the apartment to Elliott Garfield (Richard Dreyfuss), a young actor about to star in an off-Broadway disaster.

THEIR INITIAL encounters are close but unkind. Dreyfuss owns the lease, has a key, and reasonably,

expects them to vacate. Mason refuses at first, and although she eventually sees she has no better choice than to share the apartment, the air immediately fills with an electricity created by the friction of their personalities.

The movie becomes entertaining when the two antagonists eventually convert the electricity from a repulsive to an attractive force, and voila, we have love. The episode in which Dreyfuss chases Mason around the



Neil Simon

bathroom for a kiss is really about his trying to give her the courage to love again, and the development of their affair (which is all it can be) is at times really touching.

Unfortunately, this involves only a fraction of the film, and what is left

can get pretty weak. For example, probably the most farcical part of the show is Dreyfuss' off-Broadway production, a homosexual version of *Richard II* that has a hunchbacked Dreyfuss sashaying and lipping his way through the winter of our discontent.

IT IS HARD to tell whether this is intended as a cheap shot against homosexuals, directors, homosexual directors, or William Shakespeare. The nadir of tackiness is reached when, after the performance, the homosexual director feverishly asks a woman what she thought of it. Apparently her opinion is very important to him. She answers that it was all right, whereupon he shouts out, "Hey, everyone, did you hear, MOM loved the show!", and we learn that homosexuals have an oedipal bent.

Silliness is also king on the first morning of Dreyfuss's new job. Although it is common knowledge that most people involved with the theatre have a screw loose or even missing, this does not make things easier to take when we see Dreyfuss, in the lotus position, before a heathen altar burning strawberry incense, meditating and chanting Om.

Later he abandons this, (or Simon abandons the joke), but it has already taken its toll, credibility is damaged and it is obvious that gags are more important than people. In *Murder By Death* that was fine, but in a movie trying to develop a tricky love story it is boorish and ultimately fatal.

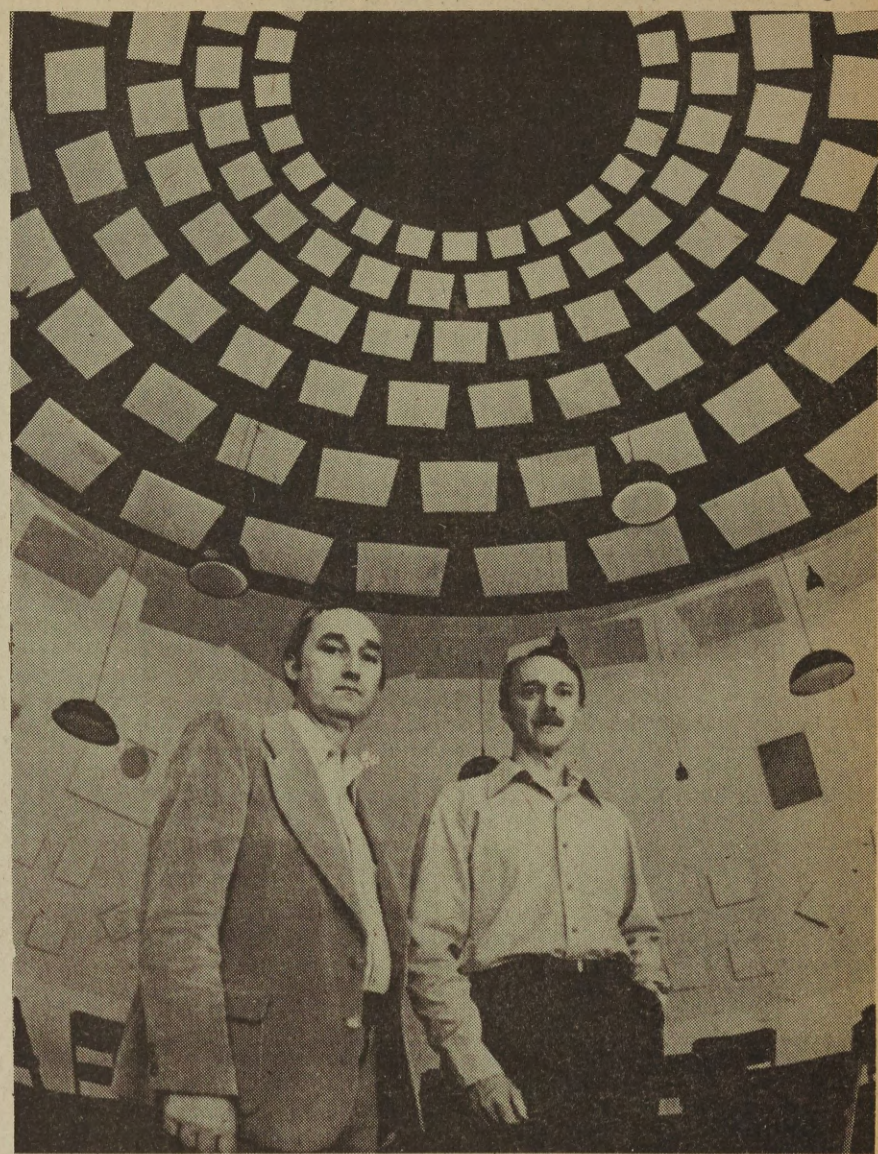
Aside from this, it is difficult during the first part of the movie to

like Mason. She has been dumped, and is going through a rough period, true; even so, she makes herself unsympathetic by being self-pitying, suspicious and even hypocritical (she "forbids" Dreyfuss to sleep with a colleague on account of daughter Lucy; yet she had just been living with a chap herself).

At the end we are asked to believe that she has become a new person, capable of trust, patience, self-sacrifice, and all the things most people have trouble with. Earlier we learned that her marriage had not worked because her husband, an actor, was never at home long enough to keep them from getting lonely. We need to see some basic difference between that old one and this new one, for Dreyfuss too is an actor, and as the movie ends he is off to Seattle to make a movie.

Their resolves alone are not enough, and from what the first half of the movie showed us of their personalities, we can't really believe they will be able to stick it out for very long. More likely, we feel, she'll be left behind someday soon as he becomes obsessed with the Devil's Tower and throws shrubbery through windows.

The *Goodbye Girl* just does not manage to overcome its basic weaknesses. No one is allowed to act naturally; there is always a punchline waiting to be set up, which makes it seem forced, amateurish and very self-conscious. It does have its moments, however, and it is a fine movie for people who want the happy ending without being too finicky about problems raised in the less than happy beginning.



Donut in the round

AP Photo

Composer Stan Shaff, left, and designer-conductor McEachern pose in their new theater, "Audium: A Theater of Sound-Sculptured Space," built out of a former bakery in San Francisco.

Joni Mitchell scores yet another triumph

By MICHAEL BAADKE

THROUGHOUT HER recording career, the strongest element of Joni Mitchell's songs has been the delicate sophistication of her imagery. Her lyrics are concise and intelligent, and reflect an eye for detail that is rarely found anywhere else. This fact became most evident with the release of *For The Roses* in 1972, and has held true for the five albums which followed it.

DON JUAN'S RECKLESS DAUGHTER is Joni Mitchell's tenth album, and the songs all follow this ideal of lyrical intricacy. Along with her particular originality, Joni describes the events in each song with outstanding lyrical beauty. She shuns any form of generality, choosing instead to promote clarity and use of specific detail in her imagery. The result is often complex, but always impeccable.

HER SONGS DEAL primarily with romance, either in a narrative or a personal sense. The strength of Mitchell's beliefs in constantly reflected in the intensity of her lyrics, as in "The Silky Veils of Ardor":

*If I'd only seen
Thru the silky veils of ardor
What a killing crime
This love can be
I would have locked up my heart
In a golden sheath of armor
And kept its crazy beating
Under strictest secrecy*

Don Juan's Reckless Daughter
Joni Mitchell
Asylum BB 701

"Paprika Plains" is another example of Joni Mitchell's penchant for imagery. This sixteen-minute ballad is composed of childhood recollections, and a narrative description of the "vast Paprika plains." The music is heavily orchestrated, and this is the only song on which Joni plays piano (on the rest she performs on acoustic guitar). As the vocals come to a conclusion, the orchestration ends, and her back-up band takes over. The transition is quite smooth and pleasantly innovative.

Many of the tunes on *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* follow a jazz-rock style similar to that established on Joni's previous LP, *Hejira*. The title cut is easily the most solid on the two-record set; Joni Mitchell on guitar and Jaco Pastorius on bass prove to be a very capable duo. They compliment each other with a smoothly arranged interweaving of the instruments, and Joni's vocalizations (both lead and background) complete the sparkling musical scene.

AS WITH MOST two-record sets, this LP dies have its weaknesses. An instrumental cut entitled "The Tenth World" becomes rather disjointed and repetitious after six-and-a-half minutes, and might easily have been replaced with something a bit more melodic. There is some minor redundancy on "Paprika Plains," but the song as a whole is enjoyable. Overall, the LP is excellent; only these two cuts show some amount of excess.

DON JUAN'S RECKLESS DAUGHTER is considerably less commercially oriented than her three previous studio LPs. With the possible exception of the title cut, there are no Top 40 candidates like "Help Me" from *Court and Spark*, or "In France They Kiss On Main Street" from *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*. This is not to imply that the music is of any lesser quality; it simply reflects the fact that Joni is becoming much more involved with the creation of good melodies, rather than the less-complex tunes of which radio standards seem to be made.

Joni Mitchell has gone through several stylistic changes since the release of her first album, *Song to a Seagull*. She started out as a folk artist, her first major hits being "Chelsea Morning" and "Both Sides, Now." Horn player Tom Scott appeared first on *For The Roses*, and his contributions added a jazz influence to Joni's songs. She also explored rock music on songs like "Blonde in the Bleachers," and later on *Court and Spark*.

DON JUAN'S RECKLESS DAUGHTER finds Joni Mitchell working on solid jazz-rock footing, with the help of prominent musicians like Chaka Khan, Airtio Moreira and John Guerin. It's an album of precise lyrical imagery and well-wrought melodies; it will be interesting to see what follows.

New album, a bleak future

By MIKE TAYLOR

WHEN I FIRST heard 10cc's new live album, *Live and Let Live*, I wasn't surprised that I didn't like it much. After all, half of the zany four-man combo, Lol Creme and Kevin Godley, quit last year to play with their electric toy, the "gizmo," leaving Graham Gouldman and Eric Stewart to carry on the songwriting and performing chores alone.

In a band led by one or two persons, the departure of a couple of lesser players might not make much of a difference.

In a band led by one or two persons, the departure of a couple of lesser players might not make much of a difference. But the music of 10cc was very much the product of four active participants; each member wrote, sang, and played a variety of instruments.

Earlier this year, Stewart and Gouldman made a 10cc album with the help of a new drummer, Paul Burgess. Though *Deceptive Bends* lacked the creative chaos that often resulted in brilliant moments on previous 10cc LPs, it contained a good number of solid rockers with odd lyrics and McCartheyesque ballads with cute lyrics.

THOUGH A MODEL for crisp production, *Deceptive Bends* had none of the trademark 10cc production effects that resulted in pop extravaganzas like "I'm Not In Love," a few years back. This time the hit was a simple jingle called "The Things We Do For Love."

But the smaller scope of the record meant that 10cc could at last go on tour without a battery of tape devices designed to recreate their complex studio sound. Since the new sound was a simple one, it shouldn't be hard to do it live, Gouldman and Stewart must have reasoned.

The pair hired four session men, including Burgess, another drummer, a keyboard player, and a bass player, and a new, six person "10cc" was born.

BUT THE PROJECT seemed destined to fail, however. How could six men re-create the musical history of a no longer existent four-member band, when only two of the original four are in the new band? It would be like John

Lennon and George Harrison going on tour with Klaus Voorman and Jim Keltner and calling themselves "the Beatles."

One pitfall becomes evident simply by reading the back of the record jacket; Gouldman and Stewart included only songs they had written. Thus gems like "Silly Love," "Somewhere in Hollywood," "Hotel," "Old Wild Men," and "Rubber Bullets" have been left off, simply because their writers have left the band.



Live and Let Live
10cc
Mercury SRM 2 8600

The selection of material for the album is even more perplexing when you consider that live versions of everything on *Deceptive Bends*, save for one song, have been included, but the band's first four albums are represented by a scant five songs in all.

ON FIRST HEARING, most of the tunes struck me as sounding very much

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE PROGRAM

JACK ARANSON

IN AN INCREDIBLE PERFORMANCE OF
HERMAN MELVILLE'S MOBY DICK

Mendelssohn Theatre
Jan. 15 Sun.: 2pm & 8pm
Tickets available at PTP Ticket Office
Michigan League, Mon-Fri, 10-12-5
For Information Call: 764-0450

FIFTH FORUM
210 SOUTH FIFTH AVENUE 761-9700

HELD OVER!
DAILY AT 7:30 & 9:30 Sun. at 5:30, 7:30, & 9:30

"ROUSING, RAUNCHY ENTERTAINMENT."
—Bill Wolf, Cue Magazine

BURT REYNOLDS · KRIS KRISTOFFERSON
JILL CLAYBURGH

"SEMI-TOUGH"
ROBERT PRESTON
as Big Ed Bookman

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE PROGRAM

NEXT ATTRACTION

POWER CENTER

Broadway's Family Musical Hit!

Tom Mallow and Gordon Crowe present

The Robber Bridegroom

a foot-stompin' musical!

Book and Lyrics by **ALFRED UHRY** Music by **ROBERT WALDMAN**

Based upon the Novella by **EUDORA WELTY**

"SPARKLING! UNUSUAL! STYLISH! FAMILY FUN!" —Grove Barnes, N.Y. Times

"LIVELY! SASSY! JOYOUS! A HUMDINGER!" —New York Herald Tribune

"A BROADWAY ROMP!! I LOVED IT! I ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT!" —New York Post

JAN. 22 Sun: 2 & 8p.m.

* SEATS NOW ON SALE !!

PTP Ticket Office, Michigan League
*Open: Mon. - Fri. 10a.m.-1p.m. & 2-5p.m.
Also available at Hudson Stores *
For FURTHER INFORMATION Call
(313) 764-0450

University of Michigan Gilbert & Sullivan Society

MASS MEETING for the April 12-15th production of
"THE GONDOLIERS"
SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 1978
8:00 p.m. MICHIGAN UNION

Sign up for both cast & orchestra auditions

Persons interested in technical crew, costumes, lights, programs and publicity are invited to attend. Refreshments provided.