



Jack Zink

Film/Theater

Premieres: Agony and ecstasy

It isn't as easy as it looks, folks. The region's three dinner-theaters are all embroiled in the testing of "new shows" which culture mavens are so wont to demand. If the off-season looked like a safe slot to fit the bill, managements at the Burt Reynolds, Royal Palm and Oakland West Dinner-Theaters have all discovered that there's no such thing as a filler or a sure-fire response to the magic word *premiere*.

Getting here has been half the agony. The Burt Reynolds operation, with the biggest behemoth on its hands, has had to settle for polishing the opening-night script of *The Cowboy and the Legend* despite general acknowledgement of needed rewrites. Producer Dudley Remus notes the vehicle has holes needing to be plugged before the musical can expect any kind of afterlife. The original goal was to be back in New York this season, but without a firm deal in the offing the show's Manhattan producers have elected not to revise the vehicle while in progress. Instead, it's currently riding on kudos awarded Eartha Kitt for her singing.

That may be the lightest load on the current docket. Since opening night, the Royal Palm's *Tuscaloosa's Calling But I'm Not Going* has had a string of setbacks that's frustrated producer Jan McArt's plans to sell the production as a touring vehicle.

Leading lady Bobby-Ellyne Kosstrin bowed out 48 hours after the show's debut (though she writes she warned the theater of a potential departure when she signed on). No sooner did torch singer Susan Hatfield step in than leading man Richard Sabellico turned ill and flew back to New York for treatment.

Director Bob Bogdanoff threw himself into the breach (and, they tell me, got a standing ovation for his risk). Bogdanoff held on for a week while beating the bushes for a new face (and voice). Sabellico will return, but not until the hoped-for tour opens, so Bogdanoff groomed Royal Palm vet Richard Huntington for the romantic lead. Huntington took over Wednesday night, hopefully concluding a month of nonstop rehearsals.

Nothing, however, compares to the worries that surrounded the Oakland West Dinner-Theater over the break-in of the supposedly Broadway-bound *Special Delivery*. After three weeks' rehearsal in Manhattan, one of the female leads bowed out the day the cast moved to Fort Lauderdale. Ruth Berger stepped in, forced to learn the show from scratch while director-star Roderick Cook was rewriting and revamping the production daily — which is roughly akin to swimming lessons with lead weights as water wings.

Cook's producers, who bypassed a London opening of another of their shows to sweat through *Special Delivery's* progress, reached a state of near-panic last weekend; about the same time, OWDT producer Brian C. Smith came close to pulling the show entirely rather than throw it up for a public slaughter.

But further rewrites and hasty adjustments beefed up the revue by the "kill deadline" Sunday night, resulting in a major improvement by the time critics arrived Tuesday. Even so, Cook & Co. have elected to continue with preview policies through this weekend.

Special Delivery miraculously arrived in better overall shape than either of the other two productions. But ... "If you think it's better now, wait awhile," crowed coproducer Peter Theodorou opening night. He claims that now the corner's been turned, the *real work* can begin.

HOLDING THE FORTE: The Boca Raton theater community pulled together to boost Frank Falcone out of a scrape two years ago, and now he's showing the favor payed off. Falcone has produced a new edition of *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* which plays at the Florida Atlantic University Theater tonight through Sunday. FAU is sponsoring the production, in conjunction with the Boca Raton Junior Theater. *Charlie* boasts a professional cast and directed by the Royal Palm's Bob Bogdanoff, who somehow found spare time between the *Tuscaloosa* crises.

Since joining the Royal Palm's *Tuscaloosa*, Susan Hatfield has joined the Caldwell Playhouse as a teacher in the children's theater program and will star in the Caldwell's season kickoff, *You Can't Take It With You*, Nov. 18 ... The Burt Reynolds Dinner-Theater has cast George Gilbert aside Abe Vigoda for its upcoming production of *Never Too Late* ... The newly-formed Fort Lauderdale Community Players has lined up some heavy artillery for its debut production of *Sugar* Dec. 5, including director Ron Headrick, former producer of those saucy revues at Miami Beach's posh Collins Avenue hotels (and now with the Emerald Hills Studio of the Performing Arts).



Ray Gange, left, and Terry McQuade in a scene from *Rude Boy*.

'Rude Boy'

There's good side (Clash) and bad (a vague storyline)

By Cameron Cohick
Rock/pop writer

Two rather disparate strains are woven together in *Rude Boy*, the new movie about the malaise of British youth and their most committed rock spokesmen, the Clash.

On the good side, we get superb semi-documentary footage of the Clash in concert, in the studio, in rehearsal and on the road. On the bad, we have a vague, meandering storyline about a disaffected young Londoner named (in the film and in real life) Ray Gange.

The movie, which made its South Florida premier last night, is the showpiece and kickoff film for the Grove Cinema's open-ended rock 'n' roll film festival and also opens today at the Movie City 10 in Fort Lauderdale.

Depending on how much volition and artistry you want to read into it, the conflict of the two elements in *Rude Boy* is either brilliant or just a mistake. The Clash segments are among the most energetic and exciting ever caught on film, while Gange's presumably realistic story is just plain dull.

The story, such as it is, is set in 1978, and the line between fact and fiction is shadowy. In the film, Gange is a sort of rebel without a cause, but he's no James Dean. He's a lout. He is not as politically conscious as his friends in the Clash, and is without their sense of direction or their populist goals. He's just looking for something to do. Even after he hooks on with the band as a roadie, his life seems to be one long bore.

The Clash, meanwhile, are taking their egalitarian message to the masses with mixed success. Whether or not their message gets through, however, they continue to rock as passionately as any group probably ever has. Their fight, if nothing else, provides them — and their fans — with some excitement.

This all makes for a fine contrast. The Clash segments put the dreariness of British proletarian life into sharp relief, and the gloomy story bits make the Clash seem even more vital. And from that

standpoint, the film works wonderfully. The only problem is the stop-start quality that results. After an hour, stopping all the time gets tiresome. Just as things get going with two or three Clash numbers in a row, we snap back to poor, bumbling Ray. Eventually, he packs it in, and leaves his job with the band. And that's that. He isn't the most appealing guy in the world, so who cares, right?

Presumably, the Clash would. The whole basis for the band, besides the fact that they make some of the toughest, most bracing rock 'n' roll around, is an empathy with the British working class, and particularly with the masses of unemployed British youth. But Ray, despite a boost from the group, goes nowhere.

The festival is set for at least eight weeks and could go on much longer, depending on how demand is and how many rock films the Cinema can come up with. The festival will be hung on the weekly 10 p.m. showing of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which will be joined every Wednesday by an 8 p.m. showing of the Ramones' *Rock 'n' Roll High School*. This tandem will be shown indefinitely. *Rude Boy* will run through Oct. 10. The rest of the movies that have been scheduled:

Oct. 16-17, *The TAMI Show*, from the mid-'60s, featuring The Beach Boys, Jan & Dean, Chuck Berry, James Brown, The Supremes, The Rolling Stones, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, plus *The Punk Rock Movie*, featuring The Sex Pistols and The Clash.

Oct. 23-24, Jimi Plays Berkeley, an hour of Hendrix from 1970, plus *The Concert For Bangladesh*, starring George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Ringo Starr and Eric Clapton.

Oct. 30-31, *Yellow Submarine* and *Help!*, two fine Beatles movies due to go out of distribution in 1981. Nov. 6-7, *Monterey Pop*, featuring The Who, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix, plus *Keep On Rockin'*, featuring Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis and Bo Diddley.

Nov. 13-14, *The Buddy Holly Story*, with Gary Busey in the title role, plus *That'll Be The Day*, starring David Essex, Ringo Starr and Keith Moon.

Nov. 20, *Rockers*, which examines the Rastafarian sect in Jamaica, its lifestyle and its reggae music.