

Arts & Entertainment

ALI KASIM, EDITOR | arts@mediumonline.ca



photo/Jim Smagata

That Summer

SAMANTHA BERGER

Remember that one summer where experiences in lust, love and loss all encapsulated into one day? And that one couple changed life as you knew it forever? No? One could suppose a tale such as this would make for good story telling. And, well, that's still up for debate.

In 1990, Margaret Ryan and her granddaughter return to the cottage where she spent the summer at the age of 17. Margaret reflects on her time thirty-two years ago at that very place. A time filled with self-discovery, and as the program reveals, a "magical place to lose your innocence."

UTM's Theatre Erindale premiered its first show of 2008, *That Summer*, last Friday. Expectations were high, as the campus theatre rarely disappoints. Written by the nationally acclaimed David French, directed by Theatre and Drama Studies (TDS) coordinator Patrick Young and starring five talented fourth-year TDS students, the cards were stacked heavily in favour of this show being a hit. Let's just say it barely fell short of a miss.

The first aspect to factor into this miss is the plot of the play. Contemporary Canadian playwright French delivers a classic coming of age story we've no doubt seen before. The play begins with what should be a grandmother reminiscing with her granddaughter about that one summer she'll never forget, but translates into Granny talking about the first time she had sex, which just so happens to have taken place in the exact spot on which her granddaughter stands.

This opening scene sets the rest of the play, and is the first in a series of awkward moments French most likely did not anticipate, but ultimately acquires in this production. That, and the Jesus-like walks across what is supposed to represent (but is ultimately disregarded for) water on stage.

The speed of the plot shifts dramatically throughout. It begins with the divulgence of a lot of information, but the story slows down as Margaret, the grandmother, played by Leslie McBay, narrates and watches on as her 17-year-old counter-part Maggie (Cydney Penner) adjusts to life up at her Ontario cottage for the summer. Maggie and her sister are left under the care of their neighbour Mrs. Crump (Catherine Boutin) when their father (Joey Romkey) must return home unexpectedly. Maggie soon meets Paul Wyatt (Brady Paron), a local boy with a bad reputation, and while she tries to fight the attraction, she gives in after bearing witness to Paul's soft side. The final day of the summer encompasses most of the

play's action, if only in a few short scenes.

The minimal set and intimate space offered at Theatre Erindale add to the development of the young love between Maggie and Paul. While a little stiff at times – whose first love isn't? – the couple's romps around the stage are personal in this small space.

In an attempt at a period piece, the play comes off as dated. The music – what would usually set the tone of the show – only adds to the awkward mood with unsuitable song choices throughout. The wardrobe screams 1950's, but the people wearing them look uncomfortable and out of place. Janelle Hanna, who portrays Daisy, sports an itchy-bitsy polka dot bikini for one scene. In a failed effort to strut around confidently, she by no fault of her own looks completely insecure in the unflattering swimwear. Jokes are centered on celebrities and sports figures from the decade, which makes it impossible to understand, let alone laugh at if you do not have a birthday preceding 1950, or a subscription to Turner Classic Movies. One would expect Margaret to add to her conversation with the audience, "I guess you had to be there."

That Summer struggles to fit into Theatre Erindale's current season,

named *Hero of My Own Life*. Maggie, the protagonist of the story, defies advice given to her and abandons the morals she once preached proudly. There is no one hero, but various attempts by all characters in the play to live by and for experiences and, to make a timely reference to baseball, hit the ball you're pitched.

Despite its shortcomings, the sold out audience – a mostly mature crowd – ate it up with a shovel. Every intended joke garnered huge laughs and the players – McBay and Penner specifically – received standing ovations.

If *Dirty Dancing* is a film that practically lives in your DVD player, then chances are you will at least be touched by this story of 1950's summer romance. Paron is no Patrick Swayze, but Maggie falls for this bad boy with the heart of gold all the same; think John Travolta in *Grease*, pocket comb and gelled hair, et al. As well, a twist M. Night Shyamalan would be envious of makes the play worth sticking around until the very end to see.

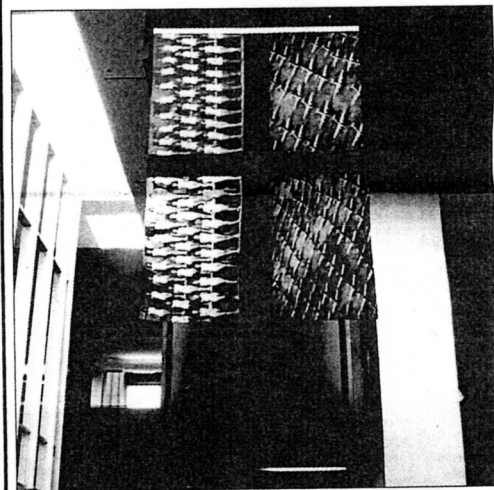
That Summer plays at Theatre Erindale through to January 26. For tickets, call the theatre's box office at (905) 569-4369.

☆☆☆☆



photo sources/Séamus Kealy

Noticed these photographs around campus recently? Jamelie Hassan's *Because...there was and there wasn't a city of Baghdad* (above) and *Stars and Stripes* by Dominique Blain (below) are all part of Blackwood's latest exhibit, *Signals in the Dark: Art in the Shadow of War*. Full article on page 6.



FEEL GREAT IN 2008



INDOOR / OUTDOOR
FITNESS / TOTAL BODY
CONDITIONING

1 hour a day
3 or 5 days a week
4 weeks

Classes start February 4

Erin Mills
6:00 am
9:30 am

Square One
6:00 am
9:30 am

Enlist today!

Register online at
www.survivorbootcamp.com

or call 905 - 808 -2677

YOU WILL RECEIVE:

- Before and After 5 point Fit Test
- 4 weeks of Total Body Conditioning
- Nutrition, Snack, Shake and How to Lose 10 lbs Tips
- Each week will become more intense – your body is never at rest!

Small Class Sizes Ensure Guaranteed Results.

Franchises Available!