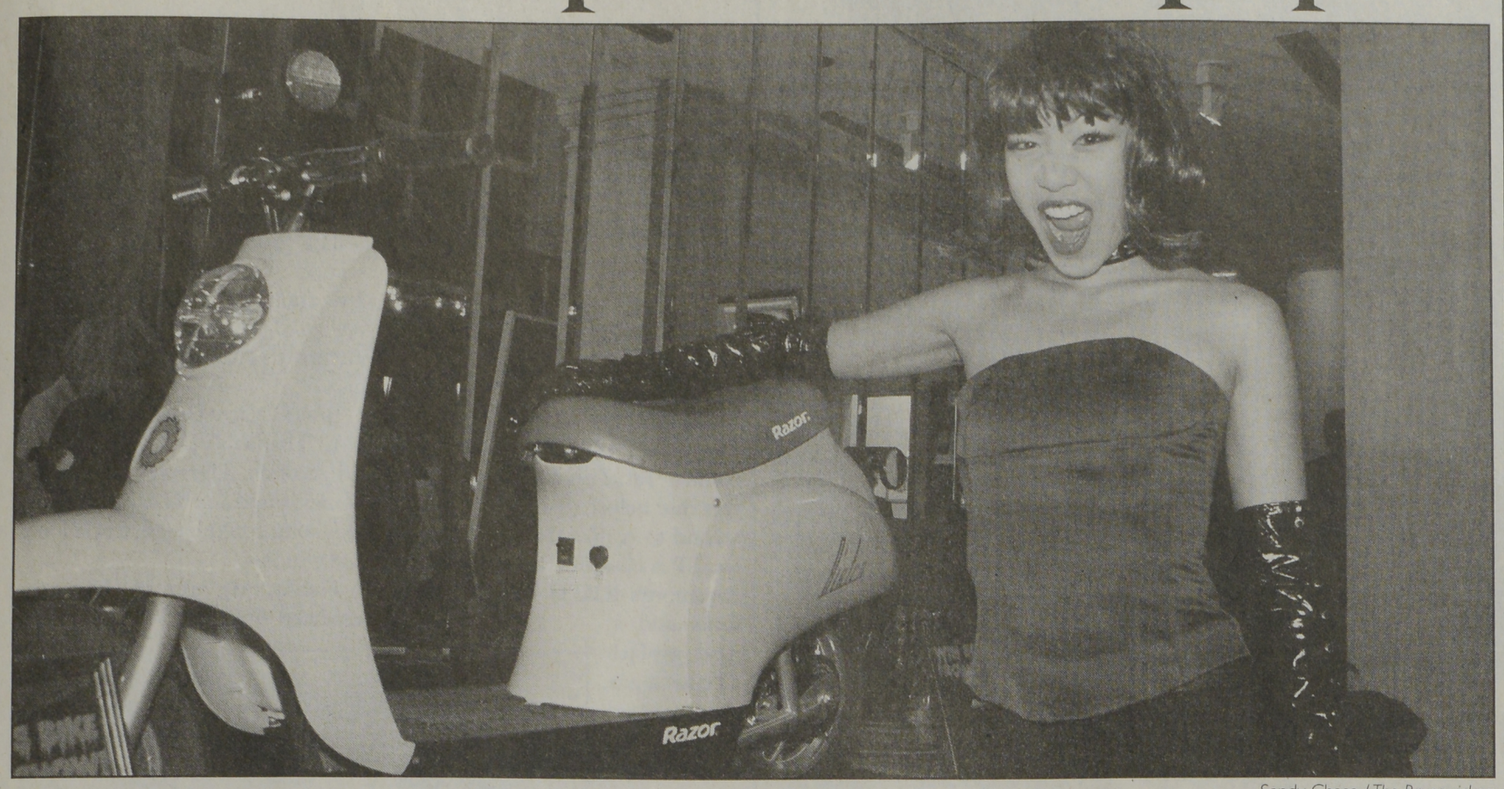
Time warps & toilet paper



Sandy Chase / *The Brunswickan*

The Rocky Horror Show has a history of having a rather enthusiastic fanbase. The lobby of The Playhouse served as a legitimate showcase of this feature in the moments leading up to the show.

KYLE STODDARD
THE BRUNSWICKAN

For the last time, no, I have never seen the Rocky Horror Picture Show movie or the stage production it is based on (simply, The Rocky Horror Show). I had heard of it, sure; I had heard the legends of thrown food, live rain and motorcycles and how amazing the film is. But, somehow, in between my cult-film discoveries and theatre antics I neglected to give The Rocky Horror Show a try. But now, after having a few of its musical numbers spoiled by overzealous friends and having heard the hype, I was finally able to take it in, on stage, for the first time this past Friday at midnight.

Walking in 15 minutes prior to the show, I found myself surrounded by multiple copies of the play's main characters. Apparently, many of the fans of the show had created their own costumes. Far more people were dressed up than I initially suspected but it only added to my anticipation for the musical to begin.

Finally, once I found my seat, another student (a proctor who traveled with our group) adorned in a maid's outfit began passing around whistles and toilet paper rolls. I eagerly snatched a toilet paper roll, not knowing exactly what to expect. However, at about ten after 12 the lights went down and the director of the show Leigh Rivenbark introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the show. He also brought out the set designer Johnny Leroux to give the audience and Rocky "Virgins" a primer on when and where to throw your props including the aforementioned toilet paper. They also explained the time warp with Leigh and Johnny starting up and the audience following.

Moving on, the course of events that followed was in one word genius, not only because the show is campy and incredibly off-the-wall but also because of the discipline and talent of both the performers and the technical staff. The opening credit sequence is an example of where the director, performers and technical crew came together to create an effect that utilized the space in a creative and efficient way. There were lights cast from behind a silk screen that allowed the actors to form a posed "silhouette" as the actor's and character's names were projected onto the other side of the screen. All the while, the amazing Tania Breen belted out the song Science Fiction/Double Feature and who began the number simply as a pair of lips projected on to the same silkscreen before the credit sequence followed.

What followed after the opening was more like a rock concert than any musical I have ever seen. The audience were dancing in their seats. There were numerous shouts of "slut" and "asshole" which my neighbour quickly explained were to follow after people say the names "Janet" and "Brad" respectively. There were flashlights shone, confetti thrown and numerous high tech special effects (such as the rocket ship flaps found in Frank 'N' Furter's castle.)

Speaking of Frank 'N' Furter, Tony LePage completely transforms in the role of the crowd-pleasing transvestite. His main numbers "Sweet Transvestite" and "I'm Going Home" rocked the audience out of their seats and at one point they rose to their feet in a standing ovation before the show was even over.

Everyone else in the cast was fantastic as well, with standout performances by each of the main characters. Riff-Raff's final moments in the play are incredibly over the top and, as such, brilliant. Janet is vulnerable and sexy and Brad is just the right amount of campy dork mixed with power-singer. The lovely but short lived Eddie also left a charismatic impression on me, due in part to his taste in motorcycles.

In the end, the best thing I can say about Theatre New Brunswick's production of The Rocky Horror Show is that though it is Sunday morning as I write this, and I am past deadline, sick and have to study for midterms, all I want to do is see the show again, if only to hear Science Fiction/Double Feature and to Do The Time Warp one more time. I have reasoned that though I left the show completely satisfied, there can never be such a thing as too much pleasure.

A bittersweet review



Andrew Meade / *The Brunswickan*

St. Thomas professor Philip Lee localizes and personalizes universal themes in his new autobiographic book.

SARAH RATCHFORD
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Divorce. In today's world of instant gratification and fickleness, the D-word comes up quite a lot. Marriage is no longer "for better or worse"; rather, it pretty much stops at "for better."

About half of my friends have divorced parents, myself included. Divorce no longer strikes terror into people's hearts as a disruption of family life since it has become so common. We now have many different conceptions of the word "family," and the nuclear version really doesn't exist anymore.

In Philip Lee's latest book, Bittersweet: Confessions of a Twice-Married Man, he re-examines divorce and the reasons behind it in a new and refreshing light.

The autobiographical novel is essentially a philosophical attempt to define the nature of love. Lee writes about the struggle of rebuilding his life and those of his children after his first marriage falls apart.

Lee, a professor of Journalism at STU, was educated at Dal in Classics. He uses references to Homer's The Odyssey to drive home his points, using the story to draw parallels with his own life.

The professor is incredibly brave in publishing his very personal story. He poses rhetorical questions such as "How could I allow myself to seek happiness in my life when the members of my family were suffering because of my actions?" at the beginning of the story. His feelings of guilt and sorrow are tangible. As the story progresses, however, Lee becomes at peace with himself. He is able to answer his questions about himself and life and love, and the answer to all of them is essentially the same: human beings are not perfect.

No matter how hard we strive to make our lives perfect and fit cookie-cutter ideals, this just isn't going to happen. We are all individuals with both strengths and shortcomings, and all we can do about our shortcomings is be aware of them and minimize them as much as possible.

Lee's story is as much a tale of self-exploration as one of the woes of divorce. The reader sees him regenerate his life and allow him to find new love and arrive at self acceptance. His words have a calming effect, and his insight can be applied to the life of virtually anyone.

The story is steeped in deeply profound wisdom.

"It took me many years to understand that this thing we called home is not a place on this earth," Lee writes, regarding his search for the perfect dwelling in which to raise a family, "but a place of the mind and imagination where we can find love, friendship, and freedom."

Philip Lee offers his own frank interpretation of a variety of other issues which are essential to leading a life of happiness, which he says, in agreement with Aristotle, is the highest human aspiration. He writes on gender issues in a new light, going so far as to admit that his psychiatrist told him that men can become childlike in marriage - and not arguing with her. He also suggests that in order to live the best life possible, we must perform regular maintenance on ourselves, our lives, and our loves, as well as daily tasks.

Lee's story is set right here in Fredericton, with some references to Saint John, Bathurst, the Mirimichi, and the shore of the Bay of Fundy. This alone makes the story really hit home, as virtually any Maritimer knows what it feels like to walk along the shore, the smell of salt in the air and pebbles crunching underfoot. The setting made it easier for me to apply what Lee had to say to my own situations.

The one downfall I found in Bittersweet had nothing to do with Lee's writing. The problem was that he continually referenced the works of great writers such as Tolstoy, Austen, and Coleridge. The story will veer away from Lee's own narrative and quote these authors, which really isn't necessary to the story. Lee is a great writer by himself, he doesn't need these other voices to tell his tale.

One gets the feeling that all of Lee's most hidden, most painstakingly thought out feelings and ideas are out on the page, written there in order to help whoever is reading it. This is a self-help book in disguise.

Bittersweet is both a captivating tale of a humble, intelligent man, as well as a philosophical work which could help almost anyone to improve his or her life.

Living the Goodlife – or not



POP TART
Ashley Bursey

When it comes to gyms, I tend to be a bit promiscuous. I want to try them all before I settle myself into workout matrimony; a sort of polygamous relationship with classes, weight rooms, and elliptical machines.

I lived my entire life in Newfoundland, and had a bit of a rapport going with a local gym. They hosted birthday parties when I was a kid; growing up, it only seemed natural to pop on down to New World Fitness for my workouts. But ultimately, they were sold and came under new management. The place looked distinctly less shabby, but it just wasn't the same.

So I trotted myself to a 24-hour fitness facility, a bodybuilder's paradise with rows upon rows of weight machines and free weights, multiple tanning booths, and a cardio room to die for. It was the ultimate in gym experiences. I was head-over-heels for 11 p.m. workouts and grunting along with some of the biggest, baddest bodies in the city as I worked my glutes and obliques.

Then I came to Fredericton. For a while, I gave up the whole "gym thing" – as a first-year student, my economical option was the on-campus gym, and I despised bussing home post-workout with mussed hair and no makeup. Plus, there was partying to be done, fascinating (if not vaguely pretentious) conversations to be had, and life to be lived.

But the itch returned, and I began to frequent the STU gym. I enjoyed it. It was clean, modern, and a beautiful facility with friendly faces.

Then, I graduated, and was at a total loss for where to take my workouts. I ultimately turned to a gym downtown (coincidentally, the same gym I had taken a 'Sexercise' class only two years previous with my friend Anna) and enjoyed it there, but a move to Fredericton's north side left me a bit empty. Suddenly, it wasn't so convenient to join a gym downtown.

When a friend asked me to tag along to one of the Goodlife gyms in the city, I decided to take my gym relationship to the next level. We suited up and approached something I've never before even attempted: a women-only gym.

Visions of my mother's Curves gym danced in my head. I could only imagine – gabbing on the weight machine instead of actually lifting anything; a single change room; an estrogen-fueled aerobics class. I thought of L.A. gyms, with their hyper-toned bodies and uber-competitive girl-jocks. I was worried.

My first few days there were actually pretty nice. The gym was new, had an adequate amount of equipment, and the classes seemed very popular.

But it wasn't a "workout" gym, per se; it seemed more like a weight loss facility than anything else. I tried to do my usual three-sets of 12 reps on one of the tricep machines and was told by an employee, for the first time, that I only needed a single set. I cocked an eyebrow and continued with my usual three.

"VISIONS OF MY MOTHER'S CURVES GYM DANCED IN MY HEAD. I COULD ONLY IMAGINE – GABBING ON THE WEIGHT MACHINE INSTEAD OF ACTUALLY LIFTING ANYTHING."

And then, on the last day of my free five-day pass, I walked in the door to a sales pitch.

"So are you thinking of joining?" The yellow-shirted blonde behind the counter asked, casually. I responded that I wasn't sure if I really liked the all-female vibe there; it was nice, but it wasn't what I looked for in a gym.

"What? Why?"

Time was ticking and I wanted to get to it, so I brushed her off. She changed tack and leaned in, conspiratorially: "When I first heard it was all-female, I didn't want to come here, either. I thought it was a bunch of lesbians and I didn't want to be stared at like that!"

My jaw dropped. "That's not what I meant at all," I said, floored. So much for the open friendliness of the chick gym, I thought, almost turning around on the spot. Really, in 2008, who the hell has the right to, firstly, presume the sexuality of anyone, and secondly, completely disdain an entire sexual orientation – to try to sell a goddamn gym pass?

It was unbelievable. I'm not sure if it was just because she grew up with a whole crew of rednecks, or if she was genuinely trying to commiserate with the consumer, but perhaps this particular employee should rethink her bedside manner – or maybe move the heck out of Fredericton, y'all.

But she did her job, I guess. She definitely sold me on something: I may still be on the lookout for a new gym, but I certainly won't be living the good life there.

Ashley Bursey is a former Arts Editor of The Brunswickan and a graduate of St. Thomas University's journalism program.

Doppelgänger

THEATRE UNB
SPECIAL TO THE BRUNSWICKAN

Fresh from a critically acclaimed run at the recent Vancouver International Fringe Festival, a New Brunswick play with a national reputation that originated right here at UNB is coming home for a pair of performances in Fredericton. Theatre Free Radical, in association with Theatre UNB, will present Doppelgänger, a play by UNB Director of Drama Len Falkenstein, Wednesday, October 1 and Thursday October 2 at Memorial Hall, UNB.

Doppelgänger is a play about Alberta oil worker Adam Smith, who is taken captive in the Middle East and accused of being a shadowy CIA operative who has committed unspeakable crimes. As he endures sleep deprivation and torture, plots escape and yearns desperately for a reprieve, the fabric of reality shifts and Smith travels on a surreal, thought-provoking, and often darkly comic journey into his past that forces him to confront the consequences of his actions and inactions.

The play combines text, music, movement and multimedia projections to explore the complex issues surrounding the oil economy, the ongoing military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the many recent sensational cases of prisoners held captive in foreign lands.

Doppelgänger will be performed at 8 PM Oct. 1- 2 at Memorial Hall with tickets ($12, $8 for students) available at the door. For more information, phone 458-7406 or email lfalken@unb.ca

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