

4-D THE TENNESSEAN, Saturday, March 12, 1983
A Clara Hieronymus Review

'Texas Two Step' Opens at Rotary

THE STUDIO'S pairing of two one-acts under the title, *A Texas Two Step*, opened last night in Nashville Academy Theater's Rotary Theater to a full house and a responsive audience. The plays, "Patio," by Jack Heffner, and *Lone Star*, by James McLure—both set in small Texas towns, hence the title—are comedies that do little to enhance the image of Texas, or of any small southwestern town, for that matter. Their characters, women in the first of the two, and men in the other, are equally unlovable and veer between farce and slice-of-life reality.

UNDER the rather crudely comic surface of each play lies naked bitterness. We laugh at the raucous humor but look in vain for a measure of redeeming grace in the people, lacking that we leave the theater feeling dissatisfied and a little sad.

"Patio" takes place behind a grubby Texas house in mid-afternoon in August, in a shadestown yard where Pearl is readying a

going-away party for her sister Jewel. It is a lousy, tasteless place, all the more pathetic because Pearl has tried to decorate the party setting in keeping with suggestions in *Better Homes and Gardens* and failed to read that this "day-core," as she calls it, is meant for little kids.

Pearl and Jewel are played by Joey Anderson and Pat McKinney, respectively. Anderson's Pearl is sour, nitpicking, and cold. She has driven her husband away by her obsession with furnishing and cleaning her house. Jewel is brassy, bedecked with beads, dangling earrings, bracelets, a bleached, fuzzy hairdo and tight jeans. Despite her rowdy wit and quick laugh, there is the same hollow chill inside.

WE LEARN as the sisters visit, fuss and reminisce that both had loved the departed husband; that Pearl misses him a little but old-maidishly prefers her neat house to his company. Occasionally, the women seem ready to share a genuine empathy, then veer

away into their superficial world. In *Lone Star*, which takes place behind a bar in a dusty Texas town at one o'clock in the morning, Roy, already drunk, sits on a pile of discarded tires drinking beer. His younger brother Ray joins him. Roy played with high angry intensity by Edward Haggard, a Vietnam veteran who has come home to find all his old buddies gone, even the Indians and coyotes. Nothing is the way it was.

As Ray, Rick Harrell is patient, a little slow-witted but brighter than you might think at first. He takes a lot of pushing around from Roy but accepts it without rancor. Harrell is a fine actor who creates a character seemingly meant for caricature and makes him believable and even touching. He hunches a shoulder, pauses, keeps the voice consistent, has a steady way of looking at others and stays within the role. In a work played at

too high-pitched a level so that we are not moved when we should be, Harrell uses calm with great effectiveness.

Mac Bennett's Cletis, Roy's only acquaintance from before the war, is a parodied character and actually adds very little to the play. Its three men, Roy, Ray and Cletis somehow conspire to give "good ole boys" a bad name.

Texas Two-Step continues tonight and March 18 and 19.

NAT Rents Out Rotary Theater

Nashville Academy Theater is making its small Rotary Theater available on a rental basis to selected great theater groups.

The first of its renters is The Studio, for its production of *A Texas Two-Step* which opened last night and will continue tonight and March 18 and 19.

NAT artistic director Guy Keeton said Rotary Theater, which seats about 85, had been used as a classroom and for its high school showcase productions. "We felt that it ought to be available for groups like Poverty Playhouse or other small theater companies needing a stage."

He stressed that NAT continues to be a children's theater in its own main-stage productions, and that it was not endorsing or involved in producing *A Texas Two-Step*, or other works that would appear in Rotary Theater.

We are setting up a screening board of staff and board members to review the materials to be staged there," he said. "We don't want to have inappropriate language or themes."

Theater companies wishing to rent this performing space may call Keeton at 254-9183. Nashville Academy Theater is at 724 2nd Ave. S., immediately behind Metro Howard office complex.



Blame it on midnight: In the late hours of March 1, Rodney Crowell and Rosalanne Cash finally got to meet Bob Seger after the rock's spectacular Municipal Auditorium show.

Rodney Crowell: Time Out

(Continued from page 1-D) even concerned with impressing myself." The man at the controls, this time around, will be veteran soul music producer Tom Dowd.

As before, vivacious Rosalanne will be there for moral support. The food-humored, easy-going Cash daughter is the perfect match for the polite, somewhat introverted Crowell. The pair share a forthrightness that, in the music business, is refreshing. They have a Tennessee home and children, and those remain their main priorities.

It's ironic that the relaxed, candid Rosalanne was the one who became the star of the family, Rosalanne is not impressed with Rosalanne one bit. But everyone else is. "I don't think about being a Mr. Rosalanne Cash at all," says Crowell. "I'm too busy. In our kind of situation you have to have your ego intact. She's my wife. I love Rosalanne and I could never let jealousy into the picture that way. I just ain't got time for it."

Time, it would seem, is of the essence. "I just told my manager I'm not talkin' anymore. No more interviews. From now on, mum's the word. I've got work to do. I've been literally tied up with everyone else's projects for the last two-and-a-half years," he says.

Nashville Notes
● Ray Wylie Hubbard has a full slate of activities scheduled for his visit here next week. He's showcasing at Track 9 Monday, taping "Nashville After Hours" at the Nashville Palace Tuesday, and "Bobby Bare & Friends" at Bullet Wednesday. (And don't be surprised if the wisley coyote lopes out of Music City with a record contract.)

● The *Poncho & Lefty* video has been completed in Texas by Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson. Willie's daughter Lana wrote it songwriter Thomas Van Zandt appears as one of the fellows.

● Swingin' John Anderson will soon be heard singing for Colt 45 Malt Liqueur with the lovely gals from Calamity singing backups.

● And speaking of the Calamity trio, their new Norbert-Palmer-produced tunes are the best stuff Pam, Linda, and Mary Ann have ever cut. Get in line, you record men.

● Ory star Jeanne Pruett and the late Marty Robbins both had hits with Jeanne's song *Love Me*. At deejay Chuck Morgan's insistence, they recorded a duet of it. Three weeks before Marty died, he and Pruett decided to put it on her new LP, and now it's out as a single.

In Studios This Week
At Creative Workshop: Tanya Goodman, R.P.M., Don Potter. At Sound Emporium: Thrasher Brothers, Jeanne Pruett, Tommy Overstreet. At Shock House: Steven Farmer, Debby Mathis, James Marvel, Ray Walker. At Sound Stage: Conway Twitty, The Statler Brothers, Richard Roberts.

And on the Opry Tonight
Charlie Walker, Jean Shep-

pard, Jim & Jesse, Jan Howard, Ernie Ashworth, Porter Wagoner, Skeeter Davis, David Houston, Ray Pillow, Del Wood, Jimmy C. Newman, Connie Smith, Riders In the Sky, Wilma Lee Cooper, Crook Bros., Stony Mt. Cloggers, Roy Acuff, Jeanne Pruett, Boxer Willie, Bill Carlisle, Roy Drusky, Charlie Louvin, Stu Phillips, The 4 Gays, Teddy Wilson, Fruit Jar Drinkers, Vic Willis Trio, Kirk McGehee, Justin Tubbs.

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