

The greedy rich in Japan



Chief Elder Onizawa (Rentaro Mikuni) gets the loot ready for a few payoffs for corrupt politicians in *A Taxing Woman Returns*.

By HELEN SEIDEL

"I felt it would be a pity if the big evaders were left untouched."
— Juzo Itami, the director of *A Taxing Woman Returns*.

CORRUPT Japanese politicians probably sighed with relief after seeing Itami's *A Taxing Woman*. The director, well known for his satirical presentations of contemporary Japanese society, had focused his attack on tax-evading businessmen.

For Japanese politicians (honest or not-so-honest) it was probably bad enough that their profession be tarnished by the regular news reports of the latest Japanese political corruption scandal.

However, they have been not so fortunate with Itami's latest film, *A Taxing Woman Returns*. Tax inspector Ryoko Itakura (Itami's wife Nobuko Miyamoto) and her fellow tax hounds are on the trail of Chief Elder Onizawa through a huge financial labyrinth constructed by his religious sect, influential politicians, banks, construction companies and trading firms — all cemented together by organised crime.

One film commentator says that *A Taxing Woman Returns* brands some of Japan's sacred cows with the mark of hypocrisy, while also studying the greedy manipulations that



have made Japan immensely rich at the cost of the quality of life of its people.

A Taxing Woman Returns opens at *Electric Shadows* today.

MOUNTAINS of the Moon is the story of the quest by explorers Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke for the source of the Nile. Starring Patrick Bergin (the possessive husband in *Sleeping with the Enemy*), Bob Rafelson and Fiona Shaw, the film will screen on Sunday at the Center Cinema as part of its "25 Major Films over 25 Sundays" festival.

BILL and Ted are back. Remember *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*? Well, Bill and Ted were just a pair of suburban teenagers who wanted everyone "to be excellent to each other". Writers Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon created the characters in 1983 while improvising comedy with

a group of fellow University students. They enjoyed the pair so much they began concocting adventures for them which, five years later, turned into a movie.

Bill and Ted's latest exploits hit the screen as *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*. The duo (played by Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter) are whisked to hell, heaven and beyond, as they attempt to outwit their twisted alter-egos, regain their lives, protect future generations from the forces of evil and, of course, win the battle of the bands. Along the way they confront such formidable characters as the Grim Reaper, God, the Devil, two Martians, the Easter Bunny, Albert Einstein and Bill's 88-year-old Granny Preston.

Bill and Ted have become part of American popular culture. "The thing about Bill and Ted," Matheson says, "is they treat everyone the same, whether it's God, the Grim Reaper, a teacher, or an ordinary person in the street."

"They are really buoyant and positive about everything," Solomon says. "Our original perception was that when they were in high school, they went around saying hello to everyone and no-one liked them. But they still felt good about everyone."

Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey starts at the Center Cinema tonight, rated PG.

A big night for fans of that rap and dance stuff

By CHARLES MIRANDA

YO, get down, get a grip and hip to the beat of the street. Take a chill-pill cos no techno toys allowed in this extreme scene, yo know what mean?

I, for one, sure as hell don't know what it means, but it sounded good. And if you're hip to this jive (more my talk) then you won't want to miss the rap gig of the month — a triple bill of Snap, 2 In A Room and Australia's own crew Beatfish.

Yes sir, the band that gave us the techno tunes everyone loved to hate, but still danced to, *Mary Had A Little Lamb* and *Oops Up are coming to the Raiders Nightclub* next Monday and they're bringing their friends.

The band, Snap, whose album stayed in the Australian charts for over a year, are bringing to Australia the type of culture that changed the sound of '90s music.

Turbo B and his German based production crew behind Snap's groove began their assault on the charts late last year with the hit single *The Power*. Their debut album, *World Power*, did stay in the charts for a year, while spawning a string of hit songs.

Their five-date Australian tour will feature 13 people on stage including a full rhythm section and dancers.

AND then on the bill is 2 In A Room, the rap duo that had a hit in the country with *Wiggle It* (the song with the popular beach babes video). Contrary to popular belief Dose and Rog Nive, the duo that make up 2 In A Room, have had extensive experience in the music business. Rog as a DJ has edited records for artists including Janet Jackson and Depeche Mode while Dose had the underground hit *Outlaw*.

Last on the bill is Australia's newest dance act, Beatfish. Being new on the dance scene will not hamper their first Australian tour as among their ranks is a wealth of entertaining experience like James Freud from the Models and Martin Plaza from Mental as Anything. Beatfish have a new single out at the moment called *Wheels of Love*.

So word to your mother this gig is big. It's happening at Raiders this Monday night. Yo dude can ya dig?

Male and female images set at odds by contrast

By AMANDA UHLMANN

COLUMNS of woman-image confront a bastion of male dominance in Julie Brown-Rrap's *Resistance* installation at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space in Gorman House.

Eight columns, crafted at a 90-degree angle, house photographs of hair braids, and are lit from behind by neon lights, shining through the glass images, highlighting the imperfections of both the subject and the technique of printing images on glass.

Resistance is a sculptural work, the photography helping to enhance the feeling of disintegration and conflict.

The tower-like columns stand in perfect symmetrical forms, their backs to each other, like school-children standing in a line. They hide their picture forms until the viewer walks around to face them.

Brown-Rrap seeks to set at odds two opposing aesthetics in this installation. The maleness of architecture — an analytical, logical and precise science — is contrasted with the femaleness of the image of braided hair.

This image nestles in the exactness of the column's corner, the spiritual and mystical and increasingly disordered, confronting the precise.

"This form is interrupted by a series of images formalised through repetition into a type of column in which the individualisation of each image is lost," writes Brown-Rrap in her artist's statement.

"These images seek to disrupt these restrictive structures through their content and technique."

Power and its relationship to the bodily is emphasised by the increasingly dislevelled braids.

The first braid, nestled and hidden in the corner, is exact, tidy, and orderly. It does not challenge or unsettle.

As the columns continue, however, and as the braids become more and more unkempt and unprepossessing, the pleasure of looking at the braids decreases.

The order and balance of the



perfect columns is finally disrupted by the fallen out, variously unwashed, unlovely hair.

The symmetry is disrupted, the hair escaping from its confines, this part of the body that is actually dead taking on a life of its own and challenging the creature that owns it with a greater will-power.

Backs that had been indistinct backdrops for the braids become clearer, and as they become clearer, they show in all their imperfection,



Julie Brown-Rrap's columns in her exhibition *Resistance* set male and female images at odds.

Three generations of a family face multicultural conflict

By GORDON SHELTON

TESSA Bremner will direct her own play *Come Away* for the Canberra Multicultural Youth Theatre, opening next week at the Canberra Rehearsal Room. The play is the first Bremner has written, although she has previously assisted in the development of other scripts.

Come Away is about the conflict — and its resolution — created within three generations of an Australian family by a mixture of cultures flowing from three continents. The story is told as the conflict comes to a head over the celebration of Christmas.

Oldest of the generations is represented by the grandmother, Anna, a Russian who suffered the horrors of the World War II in her home country and became a displaced person. She had lost her family and finally, alone, she found haven in Australia as a refugee. Yet her life centres on her lost childhood and her Russian culture. At Christmas, of all times, she does not want to be alone.

Her son Peter, probably born while his



mother was in a refugee camp in Europe, has never known Russia or its culture but, perversely, he has allowed himself to become bound up in its old traditions. He is dogmatic and didactic about what he sees as his culture, which has in fact been drawn second-hand from his mother. As a member of the Orthodox Church he cannot celebrate Christmas other than in January.

Peter's wife is Maria Angelica, a Chilean and a Catholic, who suppresses her own culture and background for the sake of family peace and quiet. Her memories of Christmas, celebrated in December, are lost in dreams of her childhood.

Michael is the teenage son of the family who sees himself as a true Australian. Yet at

home he is made to be "Russian" and at school he is called "Rusky". He would like to know something of the South American background his mother has found it expedient to suppress. Most of all he wants to be accepted by his friends as himself.

But this Christmas, after 17 years, Maria Angelica sets out on Christmas Eve to celebrate Christmas her way. This simple expression of the yearning for her culture and her heritage becomes explosive within the family.

The story of Anna's family is a microcosm of multiculturalism in Australia. It portrays not only the benefits and satisfactions of a multicultural society, but also the anguish and conflict that can rise to the surface when cherished cultures and beliefs are suppressed or forced to mingle with others, perhaps alien, but no less genuine. In the end the family is made to realise that Australia, Russia and South America are all vast lands of tremendous diversity and that within them there is room for everyone.

In spite of the drama within the family, and the lurking turmoil of the Russian and

Chilean backgrounds, *Come Away* has a good deal of humour, especially in the school scenes.

Anna is played by Stella Wilkie and Michael by Phil Roberts, both well-known Canberra actors. Maria Angelica is played by Bibi Amsteins, herself a Chilean, and Michael by Adam Somes. There are also seven school students and a seven-year-old girl in the cast. The students are played by boys and girls from Marist College, Francis Xavier School and Hawker College.

Design is by Tessa Bremner and Ian McDonald, lighting by Alex Scibberas.

Tessa Bremner is herself something of a multicultural person. Born in India and educated in England, she has been in Australia for a number of years and came to Canberra in 1989. She has a passion for Russian culture, especially 19th century Russian literature, and speaks Russian.

Come Away opens in the Rehearsal Room, Canberra Theatre, on September 26 for a season ending on October 5. Bookings on 257 1077.

MARCO, a new opera written and composed for young people by Judith Clingan, will be given its premiere public performance by the youth opera company Gaudemus. Judith Clingan is Canberra-based and holds a Composer's Fellowship from the Australia Council.

Marco is an ambitious work based on Marco Polo's travels in Asia. The opera has 15 principals, a chorus of 45 and two orchestras — one Western and one Asian — comprising 34 musicians. *Marco* is conducted by Judith Clingan and directed by Katrina Ridley.

Marco Polo was born in 1254 while his father Niccolo and uncle Maffeo were absent on a commercial expedition to China. They were asked by Kubilai Khan, who was fascinated by Western culture, to return with 100 men versed in the arts. They could not find the required hundred wise men, but set out again with two monks. Brothers William and Nicholas reached only Armenia where raging battles frightened them and they turned back.

The two men returned to the Khan's empire in 1271, taking Marco with them. Travelling through the middle-east and central Asia the three Polos reached the Khan's court in 1275. The Khan took a liking to Marco and sent him as an envoy to various parts of the empire, finally appointing him governor of Yangchow.

The Polos left China in the train of a Mongol princess, Cokachin, destined to marry a Khan in the middle-east. They travelled by sea via Sumatra, India and Persia. The prospective bridegroom had died by the time the party arrived but his son claimed the princess as his wife, a nice comment on the male-dominated world of the times. The travellers eventually reached Venice in 1295. They found a changed Venice at war with Genoa and a new Pope after the Khan in the middle-east and Rome. Their family hardly recognised them.

Three years later Marco commanded a ship of the fleet fighting against Genoa. After the Venetian defeat at Curzola he was made prisoner. During his travels Marco Polo made notes on language, customs and

lifestyle and while in captivity he dictated his book to another prisoner, the King's storyteller Rusticiano di Pisa who tended to embroider the tale. Judith Clingan has used the book as the basis for her opera.

Clingan's opera is played on two stages, Venice and the East, at opposite ends of the hall, each with its orchestra, with the centre representing the countries travelled by the Polos. An enormous backdrop depicts the Venice of the time.

The role of Marco is taken alternately by Melanie Laing and Alison Procter. Kubilai Khan is sung by Estelle Muspratt, Niccolo by Jeremy Tatchell and Maffeo by Kynan Waterford. Princess Cokachin is also a shared part — by Olivia Howell and Rachel Anderson.

Judith Clingan's music is set to fit the mood and location of each scene, with even the Western orchestra given music with Asian, especially Chinese, influences. *Marco* opens at Phillip College Hall on September 26, with another performance on September 27 and two on September 28 (matinee and evening).

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An almost perfect vision of a blind photographer

By DOUGAL MACDONALD

Proof (M) At Electric Shadows in the Boulevard Twin

Here is a situation offering a broad gamut of emotional and dramatic elements for director and actors alike to retch and assemble into a work that offers the film-goer an enormous gratification. Jocelyn Moorhouse has made of it a remarkable debut feature that has already found an excited response at Festivals both here and overseas.

Proof with a dense story without losing sight of the detail that demystifies it. It contains wit, humour made that much more effective by spontaneity and avoidance of contrivance. It has passion, anger, sorrow, understanding, frustration, charm, irony, betrayal, fulfillment, marriage, all in sufficient measure to be valid, none so overstated as to lack conviction.

Hugo Weaving's delivery of Martin's blindness and his fear of depravity is totally convincing. Genevieve Picot's Cris is a deft combination of feisty and frustrated lover. Russell Crowe gives Andy a well-judged mixture of benevolence and sensitivity to make us accept without quibble that Martin is right to trust him (even though in time Andy will betray that trust).

Proof has garnered nominations in the right categories at the forthcoming AFI Australian Film Awards.

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