

Robert Osborne

Rambling Reporter

Hepburn as woman of the year? Not quite

NEW YORK — Savion Glover, this season's Top Man on Broadway thanks to his "Da Noise/Da Funk" hoofing, will be headlining this year's New Year's Eve spectacular at the Rainbow Room atop Rockefeller Center. (Tommy Tune has traditionally held forth in that coveted spot, but he's still KO'd by that much-publicized leg injury suffered during the pre-Broadway tour of "Busker Alley.") ... Just out: James Prideaux's book "Knowing Hepburn and Other Curious Experiences" by the man who wrote several telefilms for Katharine H. ("Mrs. Delafield Wants to Marry," "Laura Lansing Slept Here," "The Man Upstairs"). In a style that is at once lively, witty, warmly affectionate and brutally blunt, Prideaux recounts his adventures working with the great Kate, an actress well-known for being what George Cukor used to call "a piece of work." Hepburn, while often kind, caring and abundantly supportive, could also be exasperating, dismissive and altogether maddening. Prideaux recounts life with Kate in minute detail. And sweat will pour down your neck so happy will you be that it was he, not you, who lived through most of the Hepburn encounters he relates. And for those "other curious experiences," the author tells of some equally tempestuous times working with Elizabeth Taylor, Burt Reynolds, Raquel Welch and Ryan O'Neal among the many. (His happiest memories include working with Julie Harris, Angela Lansbury and Wendy Hiller.) Choice moments abound, as when Prideaux recalls the time Hepburn discussed wanting to do the film version of "Driving Miss Daisy." Said J.R.: "But you can't play Miss Daisy!" Countered Kate: "Why can't I play Miss Daisy?" Said he: "Because Miss Daisy is Jewish, and who is going to buy Katharine Hepburn as Jewish?" "Oh, shoot, she doesn't *have* to be Jewish," pooh-poohed Hepburn, thereby, of course, throwing out the entire "DMD" plot ... James P. seems to have forgotten nothing in his tangles and tangos with the rich and famous, including the time Taylor was required to do a song or dance in a variety show sequence she was filming for a Prideaux TV script. Instead of doing something musical, she suggested doing maybe a dramatic reading, "something from 'Candida.'" Director Joe Hardy suggested she probably meant "Candida." (Hey, that's not a fraction as bad as some of the slip-ups I've made as a Rambling Reporter.)

James Prideaux
recounts his adventures working with the great Kate, an actress well-known for being what George Cukor used to call "a piece of work."

More reasons you may need wider bookshelves: Roger Lewis' "The Life and Death of Peter Sellers," published in England in 1994, is now finally in U.S. bookstores via Applause (HR 10/21). It covers in documented detail Sellers' self-productive career and his self-destructive personal life, right down to the death of his last wife, Lynne Frederick, on the eve of the book's hardback publication overseas ... Betty Grable, one of the last of the major stars of the 1940s to get a "Films of ..." testimonial between book covers, finally has been tributed in "The Films of Betty Grable" by Ed Hulse, now out via Riverwood Press. Complete with that most-famous of all pinup photos, naturally ... And the perfect Christmas gift for those pals who are Broadway addicts: "The New York Musicals of Comden & Green," also from Applause. Lavishly illustrated, this hardcover includes the full scripts (with lyrics included, of course) of Betty Comden and Adolph Green's famous odes to Manhattan: "On the Town" (1944), "Wonderful Town" (1953) and "Bells Are Ringing" (1956).

Book review

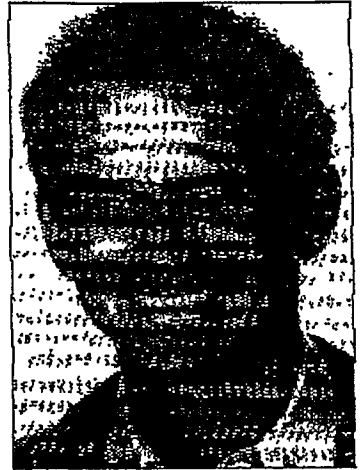
'Split Image'

By Charles Winecoff
Dutton, \$24.95, 482 pp.,
16 pp. photos

By Donald Newlove

When Tony Perkins' famous father, Osgood Perkins, died of heart failure in Washington, D.C., he'd just opened that very night with Gertrude Lawrence in "Susan and God." The next morning he received glowing reviews and his obituary side by side. He was just 45, the same age at which his brother had died of heart failure five years earlier.

Tony was 5 when Osgood died, leaving giant footprints as the first Walter Burns in "The Front Page" and starring with Paul Muni in "Scarface." Said Tony, "He became a mythic being to me, to See PERKINS on page 14



Tony Perkins: more than Norman Bates, the stammering psychopath.

TV review

'Why America Hates ...'

By Miles Beller

As examined in a probing "Frontline: Why America Hates the Press," an emergent class is taken to task.

This presentation is not really about why the general populace loathes journalism, nor does it look at the press' position in general. Rather, this broadcast principally focuses on those well-known personalities who comment on the news via television, e.g. the Sunday video view-givers who have brokered their notoriety to earn fat fees through speaking engagements and special appearances.

FRONTLINE: WHY AMERICA HATES THE PRESS
PBS
Produced by WGBH Boston, WTWS Detroit, WPBT Miami, WNET New York, KCTS Seattle
Executive producer, "Frontline" Michael Sullivan
Senior executive producer, "Frontline" David Fanning
Producer Stephen Talbot
Associate producer Holly Zerner
Editor Wendy Wank
Airs: Tuesday, Oct. 22, 9-10 p.m.

Indeed, the point of view delivered in this incisive telecast is that there is good reason to question many big-name journalists whose incomes are now sizably augmented by such outside factors as hefty speaking fees.

See "PRESS" on page 14

Concert review

Michelle Shocked

El Rey Theatre, Los Angeles
Saturday, Oct. 19

By Darryl Morden

Rather than spew bitterness and bile, Michelle Shocked finds an affirmation to carry on the art of music following four years of struggle with her former record company over the business of music.

The Texas-born singer-songwriter has emerged on the Private Music imprint with a new version of her previously self-released album, "Kind-Hearted Woman," along with a compilation from her

old label called "Mercury Poise," short for "Mercury Poisoning" — her choice for a title. So what does she do in concert? She spends the first third of the evening playing all new numbers full of liberating spirit, bountiful in rhythm.

At more than 2½ hours, the expansive performance showcased a woman who will not be bullied and reined in by the often limited musical mind of commerce. Once mistagged a neo-folkie, her palette is far more extensive. She has a tough reputation, but it's tempered

See SHOCKED on page 14



Perkins

Continued from page 9—

be dreaded and appeased."

When Tony Perkins finally married at 41, he'd spent half a lifetime as a closet gay. Both he and his housemate of six years, choreographer Grover Dale, had the same analyst, Mildred Newman, who promoted "normal life" for them. Thus, Dale had married just 10 days before Tony's marriage to boyish socialite photographer Berry Berenson, 25, then pregnant by Tony.

Said Tony: "I've never really had girlfriends before." And about his wedding: "All the time I wanted to kill myself. My life had come to a stop. I wanted to walk into the ocean and drown."

Throughout his career, the gentle, sensitive actor had played troubled teenagers and then neurotics, most famously as baseball star Jim Piersall, who experienced and then recovered from a nervous breakdown, and as Alfred Hitchcock's Norman Bates in "Psycho."

"Psycho," of course, stamped Perkins permanently as a stammering psychopath. Little credit was given to his great skill at filling frames with Norman's twitchy humanity, a role he fattened and embellished with Hitch's permission. To recover his stammer when reprising the role 25 years later, he depended on speed to get him jumpy.

Some friends later saw Norman Bates as Tony's impersonation of himself. Perkins himself said, shortly before dying of AIDS, "Let's face it, folks. I am Norman Bates."

Shocked

Continued from page 9—

perated by compassion. Shocked and her husband have lived in New Orleans the past couple of years, and the new home is reflected in her latest music.

Playing electric guitar and backed by the Oakland band Casualties of Wah, Shocked's lively new songs were seasoned in "Big Easy" blues and jazz flavoring, colored by rollicking piano and punchy trombone and trumpet.

Lively new songs such as "Poor Boy," "Oh Cleveland," the James Brown-funky "Tabloid" and the thumpy '70s disco beat of "You Are So Good to Me" make for an album that ought to be issued next year at Mardi Gras time.

Shocked also touched on her earlier years with the journey-

That Perkins was an immensely gifted actor author Charles Winecoff makes clear in "Split Image: The Life of Anthony Perkins." One quibble that arises is Winecoff's terming Orson Welles' superb "The Trial" (1963) as "pretentious," although Perkins as Kafka's Joseph K. gives a mature performance that surpasses his Norman Bates for variety, concentration (the outdoor trunk-hauling scene plays for half a reel without a cut) and moments of convincing romantic warmth (with Romy Schneider).

Though many will be drawn to "Split Image" for its more sensational side, the book does limn Perkins as an endearing intellectual whose career, despite its passages through limbo, was immensely varied, both in film and on stage (as Broadway's Eugene Gant in Ketti Fring's dramatization of "Look Homeward, Angel," and in Frank Loesser's musical "Greenwillow," and starring in and directing Bruce Jay Friedman's "Steamboat").

No cut-and-paste effort, Winecoff's research spans 300 interviews. Perkins' family did not contribute. Word from one contributor is that the family is still mad at Tony for exposing himself to AIDS.

This is a compelling life story about a mercurial, witty, extremely pleasant man whose face, in the reader's mind, turns as haunted as Dorian Gray's and stares up at us from under a frozen lake of conformity in which he's drowning. The sad part is that Perkins could never explore on screen the nonconformist side of his split image. □

woman's chronicle "Come a Long Way," a homey reading of her letter from an old friend, "Anchorage," and a bluesy shuffle take on "If Love Was a Train." Solo, she sang several of the quiet, intimate vignettes from the current album, then brought part of the band back for the moving "Child Like Grace," about a mother's loss of her 4-year-old daughter and the more mainstream pop-rock of the biographical "The Hard Way."

A natural performer, Shocked has a little preacher in her, with a lot of comic wit and the enthusiasm of a camp counselor as she led chorus sing-alongs during various songs. Ever the honest raconteur as well, she was equally glib and sincerely thankful to the crowd for all the support during her toughest times, not so much a kind, but a truly good-hearted woman. □

AFI festival review



Gena Rowlands, left, and Marisa Tomei star in "Unhook the Stars," a thumbs-up directorial debut for Rowlands' son, Nick Cassavetes.

The American Film Institute's 1996 Los Angeles International Film Festival runs through Oct. 31. Screening site below: the Mann's Chinese Theatre at 6925 Hollywood Blvd. in Hollywood.

TODAY

UNHOOK THE STARS

4 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Gena Rowlands stars as "a woman of a certain age," a widow with two grown kids who always does what's expected of a mature adult of her station. A bittersweet story of one woman's personal growth and awareness, "Unhook

the Stars" makes an impressive directorial debut for Nick Cassavetes, the son of Rowlands and late maverick director John Cassavetes.

Writer-director Cassavetes shows a light and confident hand. Always respectful of the natural rhythms of everyday life, Cassavetes never resorts to indie-style histrionics: No jarring frames, no overreaching dramatics mar this smart and perceptive film. Like life, the only surprises are ones that are there for a long time but for the noticing.

Dwaine Byrde

'Press'

Continued from page 9—

Quite so, this "Frontline" makes it achingly obvious why so many star journalists seem as trustworthy as the public officials they cover; these correspondents and commentators are generally more concerned with getting invited to the right Washington parties and improving their own financial lot. The elite Washington press corps now constitutes a rich and powerful caste that seemingly worries little about the moral contradictions of feathering its own bed courtesy of special-interest groups. Here is a class of "imperial pundits" maintaining scant critical distance from those it allegedly objectively scrutinizes.

This "Frontline" blasts so-called reporters who would rather come across as celebrity buffoons — serving up microwaved sound bites — than apply themselves as responsible professionals who are thoughtful, deliberate weighers of the news. As seen here, the line between entertainment and journalism is beyond loose and lax, as

permeable as a slashed membrane.

The insiders focused on include veteran reporter Jack Germond of the Baltimore Sun, who is on the contentious "The McLaughlin Group" and who receives \$5,000 per speaking engagement; and ABC's Cokie Roberts, who has not been shy about actively hitting the lecture trail. Also heard from is Bob Woodward, assistant managing editor of the Washington Post, who broke Watergate with Carl Bernstein and embodied the very soul of the investigative reporter.

Media tours, the impact of a high-paying lecture circuit that lavishly rewards those whose job it is to impartially report on government (Sam Donaldson asks \$30,000 to speak) and other disquieting issues are pursued. And James Fallows, editor of U.S. News & World Report and author of "Breaking the News," says of the star-making machinery: "We should look askance at people in my business when they seem to be doing things mainly for the money." □