Silly Buggers escape from madhouse


By David Shaw

"Madness shouldn't be repressed—it causes mental illness." Thus proclaims Father Fun (occasionally known as the Reverend Pleasure) between puffs of a marijuana cigarette. This odd fellow is actually one of the Madhouse Company of London, a troupe that has brought its special brand of insanity to Boston for a month in the form of a review titled 'Silly Buggers.'

These fellows are indeed quite silly, and they never let you forget it for a moment. As you enter the theatre a derelict (complete with black trenchcoat and runny nose) accosts you and asks if you would like to take something he adds, "That one I didn't stick up me nose!" When he finally convinces someone to take something he adds, "That one I did have up me nose!"

And so the show begins. We soon meet the rest of the company: Hamlet McWallbangen (a.k.a. Marc Weil, Mae of Destiny), Reggie Rutherford (his real name) and D.M. Waldo, who provides the music. They perform a series of the most bizarre sketches you've ever seen: "The Amazing Creamiwell"; "The Demented Shakespeare" sketch features Steiner delivering a confused Hamlet's soliloquy—a joke invented and best developed by Mark Twain. In "The Amazing Creamiwell," Weil (the only American in the company) delivers a perfect Sam Spade performance, but the sketch loses to an absolutely ridiculous plot.

Despite the occasional mediocre sketch, each member of the madhouse manages to be an excellent performer. Marc Weil stands out as the best of the troupe, handling the greatest variety of roles. Reggie Rutherford's portrayal of the serious Shakespearean actor are studies in subtle parody. Rutherford was actually trained as a Shakespearean actor. The stranger parts have been assigned to Marcel Steiner, who handles them excellently. And one shouldn't forget the musical contributions of D.M. Waldo, who plays a multitude of instruments (kazoo, piano, organ, synthesizer, trumpet and cymbals) throughout the show. His self-composed background music is quite effective, especially during the first act. When asked if he was a musician, Steiner replied: "It's not true that the Surgeon General has a warning that the Madhouse Company might have behaved on amphetamines, or what Monty Python would be like after dropping acid, go see the Madhouse Company of London and 'The Amazing Creamiwell' sketch."

In a recent interview, Steiner explained: "We used to have a very small person in the company—not a midget, mind you, he was just scaled down a bit. I built the theatre for him so he would have a comfortable place to sit. I showed the theatre to Samuel Beckett, but all he said was 'Small, ain't it?'."

One can't resist comparing the Madhouse Company to Monty Python or Beyond the Fringe, yet the Madhouse Company existed before Monty Python and coexisted with the Fringe. There is also a tremendous difference in styles—Python is very television oriented, the Fringe is rather intellectual, but the Madhouse Company is best described as rowdy pub humor. When they attempt something out of this style, however, the material proves to be a bit thin. The "Demented Shakespeare" sketch features Steiner demonstrating his "Time Travel Apparatus.""

The highlight of the show is Steiner's presentation of "The Smallest Theatre in the World," a box the size of two telephone booths attached to a bicycle. The theatre holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the smallest theatre in the world never to play to holds only two people, and is billed as "the only theatre in the world never to play to