The Two Gentlemen of Verona, by William Shakespeare, performed by the MIT Shakespeare Ensemble, directed by Charles Franchot '82.

According to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona has the unenviable distinction of being the least loved and least regarded of Shakespeare's comedies." For four and a half acts, the Shakespeare Ensemble's strong cast and fine direction contradicts this assessment.

The problem with *Two Gentlemen* is its remarkably sexist and un-Shakespearean ending. The play starts out typically enough, with one of the two gentlemen, Valentine, leaving Verona, traveling to Milan, and falling in love with the Duke of Milan's daughter, Silvia. The other gentleman, Proteus, initially remains in Verona with Julia, the woman he loves.

By play's end, however, Proteus has abandoned Julia, betrayed Valentine, and tried to force himself on Silvia. Amazingly, Valentine almost instantly forgives Proteus and offers Silvia to her would-be rapist. Silvia does not object, but ends up with Valentine in the end anyway, and Julia ends up with Proteus, even though she witnessed the attempted rape along with Valentine.

If this were a Lecture Series Committee registration day movie, the TV work would receive dozens of pointless letters denouncing the depiction of women as desirous of rape. Because Shakespeare is considered art and the sexes are just bad literature, such letters should not be forthcoming.

In *Two Gentlemen* the characters and the themes tend to be flawed and the main point becomes humor, and from this point of view the Ensemble's performance is brilliant. There are no weak links in the cast and several very fine performances.

Daria Mertel W is sparkling as Julia, both as a woman and later as a man, a disguise she takes on to follow Proteus to Milan. Debra Durney W brings remarkable comic ability to the otherwise obscure role of Lucetta, Julia's waiting-woman.

The comic servants, Laurence (David Inns '83) and Speed (David Bruckman '83), are very funny, especially when they are on stage together. They would steal the show were it not for the excellent job done by the renegade outlaws, particularly the clumsy one who is constantly eating. Their comic finish to the play almost makes up for the dramatic implausibility of the ending.

In fact, the Ensemble handles Shakespeare's clumsy ending as well as can be expected, but for one small detail. Sylvia should not continue smiling when she hears Valentine offer her to the man who just recently attacked her.

Although this is hardly one of Shakespeare's funniest plays, the Ensemble turns many scenes into gems. The audience spontaneously applauded after Act 2, Scene 1 which ends with the witty Speed explaining to the bewildered Valentine the trick Silvia has played on him.

Given the questionable quality of the material, the Shakespeare Ensemble is to be applauded for its presentation of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. One can only wonder how they would have fared with a better Shakespearean comedy.

Joseph Romenesko

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**Phil, er, Martin Briley**

**One Night With A Stranger, Martin Briley on Mercury Records**

There's been a flood of new groups on the music scene lately, with very new, distinctive styles. Some are slaves to synthesizers and have blended into the category of plastic computer groups, while others mix the styles of various groups which have already been successful, creating what at first seems to be a new sound. I'm afraid Martin Briley and his new LP *One Night With A Stranger*, provide a classic example of the latter, although this is not necessarily bad.

If there ever was a pop album, this is it. *Stranger* makes Asia seem avant-garde. Like most pop, the album is very listenable, and some tracks, like "She's So Flexible," are extremely danceable.

Briley's voice is similar to Phil Collins'. I don't think even Phil's mother could tell them apart on the phone. And talk about ditty we. I found myself asking during every track, "Of whom does that remind me?" I finally came to the conclusion that if Phil Collins, Cliff Richard (with whom Briley has worked), Steve Winwood, Air Supply, Alan Parsons, and Foreigner cut an album, this would be it.

Briley's lyrics — nothing earthshaking — provide a good base for his songs. Almost every tune has to do with some aspect of the usual female/male relationship: "A Rainy Day is New York City." "Dumb Love," and "One Night With A Stranger," could easily be combined and titled "Boy, Do I Hate One Night Stands." The album cover also seems to suggest this sentiment.

Could this be another pop concept album? I'd compare it to Styx's *Paradise Theater*, but Briley has never done anything to deserve that kind of abuse. "The Saft In My Tears," the album's first single, is a good song both musically and lyrically. Briley definitely has a sense of humor which runs through his album:

*She can be as hard as steel But she can apologize like sand In even when she's busy She finds time to squeeze me in.*

*Put Your Hands On The Screen,* which takes a healthy stab at TV evangelism, is, strangely enough, musically disappointing. The rest of the album is the usual pop roundup: "I Wonder What She Thinks of Me," "Maybe I've Waited Too Long," and "Just a Mile Away From Here," all highlighted by Collins — I mean Briley's — distinctive vocals.

Many pop albums are a pointless collection of garbage thrown together to make a few bucks. Martin Briley has managed to avoid this trap with very catchy melodies and humorous, interesting lyrics. *One Night With A Stranger* is a good pop album, but I still can't help wondering why Briley and Collins have never been seen in the same studio together.

Carl Bauer