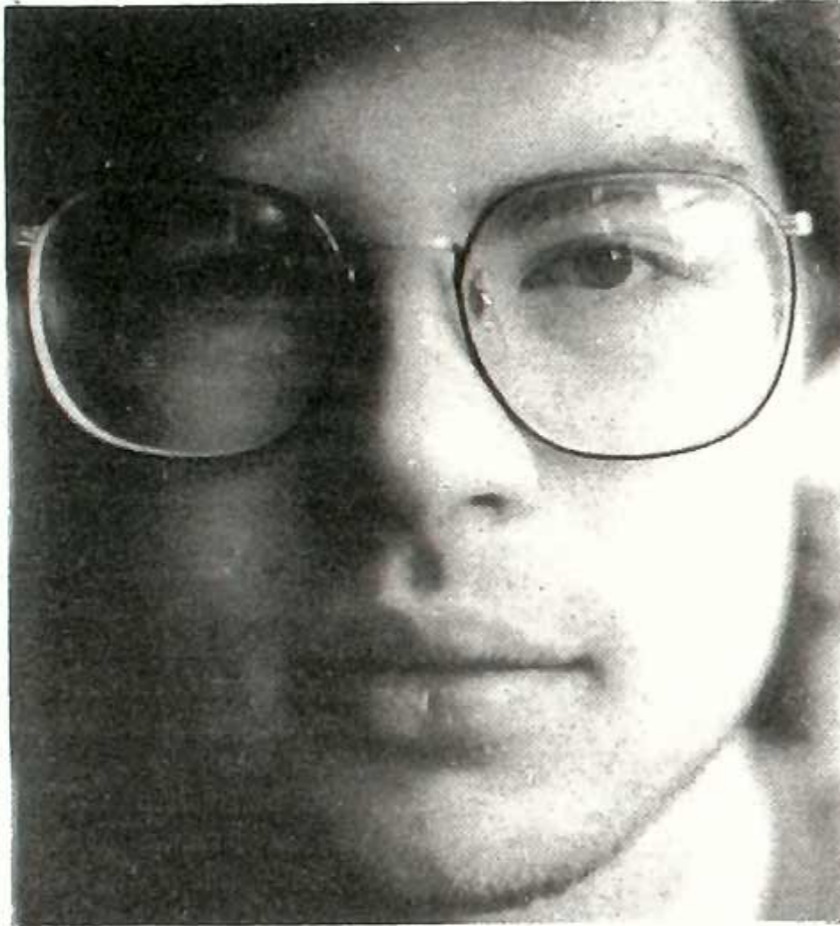


## Kibbitzing With Kerr

Photo by Alex McDowell



Playwright Bob Kerr

by David Cline

Wearing glasses, a clean flannel shirt, and deck shoes, Bob Kerr looks pretty Joe College. And his Dayton double looks like the average dorm room. There is little to suggest that here resides the writer of off-Broadway plays.

Macalester Sophomore Kerr recently became the first person to win the national Young Playwrights Festival two years in a row.

Kerr's play *Finnegan's Funeral Parlor and Ice Cream Shoppe* opened last week at the Playwrights Horizons Mainstage Theatre off-Broadway. The play is slated for an 18 week run.

Kerr first became interested in playwriting after seeing a production of *The Fantastiks* at his high school in Stillwater, Minnesota.

"*The Fantastiks* uses a very sketchy set, yet they can make a whole world happen in front of you," Kerr said. "That really amazed me and I wanted to get involved in theater."

He wrote and directed his first play, titled *A Bouquet of Thorns*, for a high school play festival.

"It was a really heavy-handed suicide kind of thing," Kerr said.

Kerr then went on to write *And the Air Didn't Answer*, in which a teenage boy questions the existence of God. The play was one of last year's Festival winners and was directed in New York by Kerr's mentor, playwright Christopher Durang. Durang wrote *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains it All For You*, a play that Kerr said has inspired his own work.

Durang advised Kerr on his latest winning play. *Finnegan's...* deals with a mortician's son who begins talking when he is 18 years old. Like Kerr's previous work, the play deals with a teenager who doesn't fit in with the world around him. Much of these feelings come from Kerr himself.

"I seem to see the world in a different way than a lot of people do," Kerr said.

His skewed vision obviously appeals to people. His wry view of life has been likened to that of Durang.

In August, Kerr travelled to New York to work again with Durang and actors rehearsing *Finnegans...*

"It was a lot of fun to see something that I wrote getting so many people going," Kerr said.

"But there comes a strange part too, as the actors start to make the characters their own, when it seems that what's going is not exactly what you had written. Its like watching a child growing up I'd imagine."

Kerr is now too old for the Young Playwrights Festival. He is cherishing his remaining years in Macalester's protective bosom before venturing off into the cruel and competitive world of writing.

"Its nice to come to Macalester and concentrate on other things: literature, creative writing, and other sides of theater," Kerr said. "And I have the chance here to write plays and have them produced too."

Kerr is currently working on a play titled *Six Characters in Search of Water* which will be directed by senior Deb Simpson as a Student Directing project this Spring.

And after Macalester, Kerr plans to continue writing.

"Hopefully I'll be able to make a living at writing," he said. "I'd probably try to write screen plays too. I have this fear that I'll get sucked into television and put all my energies into writing for *Growing Pains*."

## The Clash Compared To The Draghounds

by Tony Van Dorston

The Draghounds will have their first big show of the fall at the 7th Street Entry on Saturday, October 21st.

The Draghounds have been winning over fans at Mac and the Twin Cities ever since they started gigging here in 1987. Like the Gear Daddies, all four of them are from Austin, MN, where they began playing four years ago. Drummer Brien Lilja and guitarist Darin Rinne are juniors at Macalester.

In the spring of 1988 The Draghounds released a 21 song tape called "Mel Is A Deadbeat!" The first side contained their earliest songs, before Darin Rinne joined the band. Songs like "Velvet Hand," "Never Live Without," "Happy Dogs" and "Naked Transit" immediately showed singer/guitarist Mike Nicolai's strong writing talent. The sound was bare-bones; effective in its simplicity. Brien Lilja's drumming was then and still is some of the best I've ever heard.

Darin's additional guitar helped flesh out the second side. It includes "Bibiana," with one of their best choruses. "Wild Flower Storm" is probably the prettiest Draghound song recorded.

In the summer of 1988 The Draghounds released an independent single containing "Never Live Without" and "Utopia Man Blues". Tom Herbers (Soul Asylum's "Clam Dip & Other Delights") helped engineer for them.

They have since become a much tighter band, playing shows at the 7th Street Entry, The Whole, Valli's and occasional Kirk basement T.G.I.F.s. Darin Rinne's guitar playing has especially improved, shown by their interpretations of "Voodoo Chile" and "Dear Prudence".

I saw the Draghounds best show ever at the Speedboat Gallery in July. Having written over 30 songs, along with a handful of great covers, their shows are always full of surprises--this time a cover of Simon & Garfunkel's "Groovy Thing." They also tore through the New York Dolls' "Trash," with bassist Davin Odegard throwing in some goofy vocals.

One of Darin's songs especially sparkled. "Trials That Smile" has the best musical arrangement I've heard so far. Darin's loud, aggressive guitar playing complements Mike's clean sound perfectly.

The Draghounds have also used vocal harmonies to great effect, epitomized

in "Never Live Without," when Brien contributes an almost sweet sounding vocal to the chorus. It balances out the nearly menacing bass and guttural guitars to produce an insanely happy song.

Along with the previous two songs, "Chain", "Every Tale", "Save Your Gold", and "Metal (This Ain't No Dream State)" make up a group of songs that not only compare well with those of the local bands, but with any band.

The Draghounds aren't pretending to blaze new musical trails. They are dedicated to making intelligent, moving rock 'n' roll for a long time to come. Their thoughtfulness and vitality is much in the spirit of bands like The Clash, and from talking to them, they are some of the nicest guys you would ever want to meet.

ME: Looking at your scrapbook last year, I noticed you had a different name for a while.

BRIEN: We had several names actually, and they're all even uglier than "The Draghounds", so it'd probably be best if we didn't even say what they were.

ME: The lyrics you had reminded me of that punk midwest angst.

BRIEN: Oh, that's what it was actually, punk Austin angst.

ME: Was that from boredom?

BRIEN: Well yeah, what do

you expect from Austin?

DARIN: Brien had spiked Billy Idol hair and Mike wore bathrobes. And Ode (Davin Odegard) played football. There you go, there's the lineup. And I would roadie for them on occasion. That was my role, I was like the fourth Draghound before I was the fourth Draghound.

BRIEN: Like Pete Best.

DARIN: Yeah, I was Darin Best...So anyway, I kept bugging them and said hey, am I gonna play with you guys again or what?..So they came back from the gig at the Colonial in Austin, subbing for the Gear Daddies, and they wanted to practice with me! I was very excited about that.

ME: You were already at MAC?

DARIN: Yeah, Brien and I were at Macalester, Mike had quit the U pretty much.

BRIEN: And Ode was starting his permanent employment at Arby's.

DARIN: So we're the only students...Ode is working full time, and Mike is just about full time. Actually, me and Mike are working about the same amount of hours and I'm still doing a couple classes.

ME: So Mike and Ode are set on the Draghounds for a long term commitment?

BRIEN: Yep, we're gonna stick it out for as far as she'll go, milk it for all its worth, as they say.



Draghounds members (clockwise from bottom left): Mike Nicolai, Davin Odegard, Brien Lilja, Darin Rinne. Tony's never-ending article continues next week...