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Don Mills: The Play

by Kenneth A. Ross

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17 March to 21 March will see *A Day in the Life of Don Mills* presented at Theatre Glendon. The play is the work of its two principal actors, John and Mike Erskine-Kellie.

Glendon
College
Theatre

Two people writing a play can be a touchy proposition, especially when the collaborators are brothers. Most families have their fair share of stories concerning sibling rivalry. The brothers Erskine-Kellie maintain that this does not apply to them.

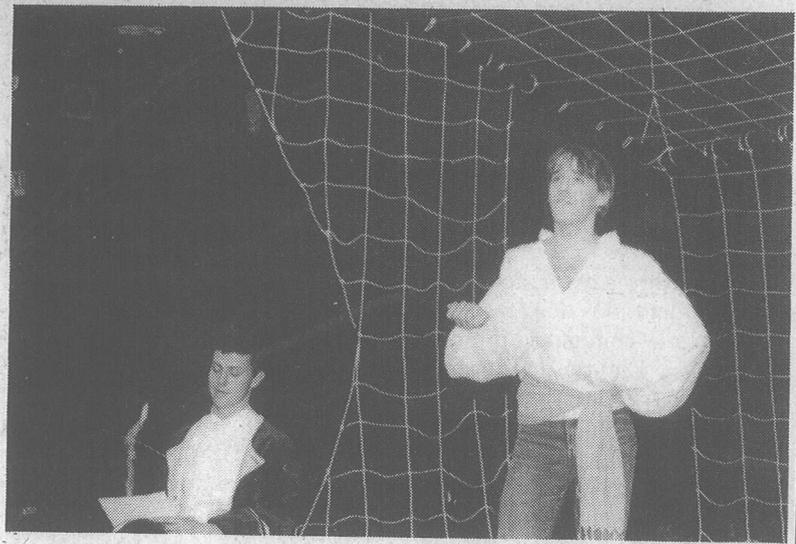
"People always seem to say that to us: 'How can you do that?'" says Mike. The two speak of having an uncanny ability to be in tune with each other creatively, of complementing each other thoroughly. They have been working in concert for four years now.

The theatre was something that the two brothers discovered out of personal interest. Neither have classical or professional training. They took in what was happening at the small Queen Street venues and other places, exploring Toronto's 'off-broadway' scene, so to speak. Out of their interest they decided to get involved.

Besides *Don Mills*' being an effort of two brothers, there is director Steve Devine. Devine's role has been to help the brothers edit down and flesh-out the play, to "Work the script to a point where it works better." The three held intensive creative sessions in January to give *Don Mills* a cohesive structure. The third, outside voice has been greatly appreciated by the brothers. "Steve gave the play its shape," Mike asserts.

The play will consist of sixteen connected skits on the theme of that subculture in urban centres known as 'the suburbs'. A sampling of just some of the skits should strike an eerily familiar chord with anyone from a city or now living in one.

One features two fathers cheering on their sons at a hockey game. Both men are executives, average men on suburbia; yet when their sons do battle on the ice they



photograph: Patrick Barville

turn into Romans watching a perverse circus. They cheer on their boys, yelling encouragements such as "Rip his throat out!" or "Smash his head in!" The men's sons are on opposing teams and try to be polite to each other in the most facile manner, their flimsy masks falling away every time their five or six-year-old has the puck.

Another has the brothers playing caricatures of two women named Carol and Sharon meeting in a supermarket. The two conduct a capricious post-mortem on the reputations of people they murder during their discussion. They grind their neighbours into the dirt — and each other by the way of asides. At one point the topic of cellulite comes up about someone else and suddenly the two women fall silent, gauging each other. In chorus they then exclaim: "BUT YOU LOOK WONDERFUL!"

A third features Freud debunking his own theory of id, ego and super-ego, replacing it with the new concept of urban, suburban, and rural. The suburban Don Mills male seems average on the outside, as does his female counterpart, yet are two repressed people seething with sexual frustration. A case history: A couple wake on a Tuesday morning and their initial urge is to have sex right there and then, but they repress this desire. It is not a Sunday night after digesting a roast beef dinner, it is a

Tuesday morning, a workday, and sex at this time is simply not done. The two are damned to a middle-class hell of routine.

Don Mills has been honed down to a structured and cohesive form. It has played previously (at the Ohm Place Theatre on Harbord Street) and John and Mike plan to take *Don Mills* to Edmonton and Vancouver during the late summer of this year. In fact, Toronto might lose these two entrepreneurs of the stage. Toronto is a hard place to make it these days and the West is supposed to have a dynamic theatre scene with a cutting edge. See them from the 17 to 21 March before these young men decide to go West.

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