

Films depict old Russia

From the Video Vault

By BRIAN SHELTON
Staff Writer

The *Video Vault* is a column devoted to movies on videocassette. It basically involves a handsome and available reviewer who reviews all kinds of movies from dramas to comedies. My ultimate goal is to direct you to what's worth renting (or buying) on the shelves and to steer you as far away as possible from the nuclear bombs.

Talking about bombs, the Soviet Union's latest coup comes to mind. Soviet President Gorbachev has about as much control of the USSR as I do over my love life and filling his void in power is Democratic President Boris Yeltsin. With the efforts of Yeltsin, the one "red devil" will likely become a Democratic ally.

Even though the complexities of the political world might change, the thought of Communism nurtures a certain kind of nostalgia. In a way it's like Darth Vader or something, maybe that's why I sort of wish the USSR wouldn't change. But, change is a part of life, so I should probably just accept it and get on with this *Video Vault* which is about what else, but movies with Russians in them.

"Red Dawn"(1984): Before he was dirty dancing, surfing and coming back to life, Patrick Swayze played a leader of teen commandos formed to repel Soviet commies from our own soil. Those commies, deciding to forego nuclear war, parachute into the United States and turn the teen's town into another Moscow. No one can stop them except these whining pubescents but throughout the movie, I was wondering where the National Guard was. Don't they get paid to prevent stuff like this? (C)

"Red Heat"(1988): Arnold Schwarzenegger, who this summer played a kinder, gentler and totally wussy Terminator, plays Ivan Danko, a lockjawed Russian cop who must enlist the aid of the non-talented Belushi brother (James) in

order to catch a Russian bad guy. By the end, the two will be pals, but the movie somewhat overcomes its predictability by using some humorous culture-clashes. Schwarzenegger has never heard of *Dirty Harry* and Belushi thinks Schwarzenegger looks like "Gumby," but they overcome their differences and realize their similarities. For instance, neither one can act worth a flap-doodle... (B-)

"The Hunt for Red October"(1989): I'm sensing a color-scheme here. Is "red" in the title of every movie related to the Soviet Union? Actually, this is the title of a book which the movie is based on and, for my money, it's one of the best of the genre. Alec Baldwin plays a government intelligence agent who must figure out whether a renegade Soviet submarine captain (Sean Connery) is defecting or not. The movie is full of action and suspense as both the Russians and Americans play "sink the sub" with Connery's boat and the acting is top-notch. (A)

"Spies Like Us"(1985): An underrated comedy starring Chevy Chase and Dan Ackroyd as spies. Actually, they're just decoys sent to detract attention away from the two real spies. Chase and Ackroyd's misadventures are funny and while the movie drags at times, it always gets back its momentum. There are also tons of cameos, including one by Bob Hope. "I'm 108 and still doing three specials a year." (B+)

"The Experts"(1989): Did anybody else see this movie besides me? If you haven't, you didn't miss much. John Travolta and Arye Gross play hip entrepreneurs who are offered a nightclub by a guy who happens to be a Soviet agent. In the movie, Travolta and Gross find themselves in a small town that looks like Nebraska but is really a KGB training site in Moscow. Isn't that hilarious? What's more hilarious is the townspeople act like they're in the '50s. In short, you're lucky if you find more than one laugh in this, and truthfully, I'm surprised this movie didn't end glasnost. (D-)

Well, that's the "Video Vault." Be sure to tune in next time when I'll probably discuss some other notorious topic.

Chillin' out



These USC students took a pool break in the Russell House Gameroom last week.

Keith Johnson/The Gamecock

Theatre to present array of plays

By KATHY HEBERGER
Staff Writer

Despite budget cuts, the USC Department of Theatre, Speech and Dance plans to present nine main stage performances this year.

"We're in a real crisis right now with our budget. Cuts in our budget have really hurt us," said Thom Compton, chairman of the Department of Theatre, Speech and Dance.

"But for all the difficulties, I'm excited about this season. We've got the most talented group of professors, actors and designers we've had in a long time," he said.

The theater department's next main stage performance will be *The Lark*, which will be at Drayton

Hall Sept. 26 — Oct. 6.

The Lark by French playwright Jean Anouilh is an examination of the life of Joan of Ark.

"This play is particularly relevant in a 20th century world in which it's hard to tell the difference between right and wrong choices," Compton said.

In October, graduate student Richard Gilman will direct *Hard Times* at Longstreet Theatre. This staging of Charles Dickens' novel will feature undergraduate student talent. Auditions for this play will be Sept. 3—8. Scripts will be available Thursday, Aug. 29 at Longstreet Theatre.

Hard Times shows a boy who must mature after a terrible educa-

tion. "It's a wonderful satire and a real indictment of education. It's about how people are able to grow through their childhood," Compton said.

In November, Professor Jim Patterson will direct Bernard Shaw's *Misalliance*. This play is a comedy, a social satire, Compton said.

The USC Dance Company will present a concert in Longstreet Theatre in December. The company plans to have another concert in April 1992.

Other plays tentatively scheduled for the spring semester include *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Frogs*, *The Diviners* and *Reckless*.

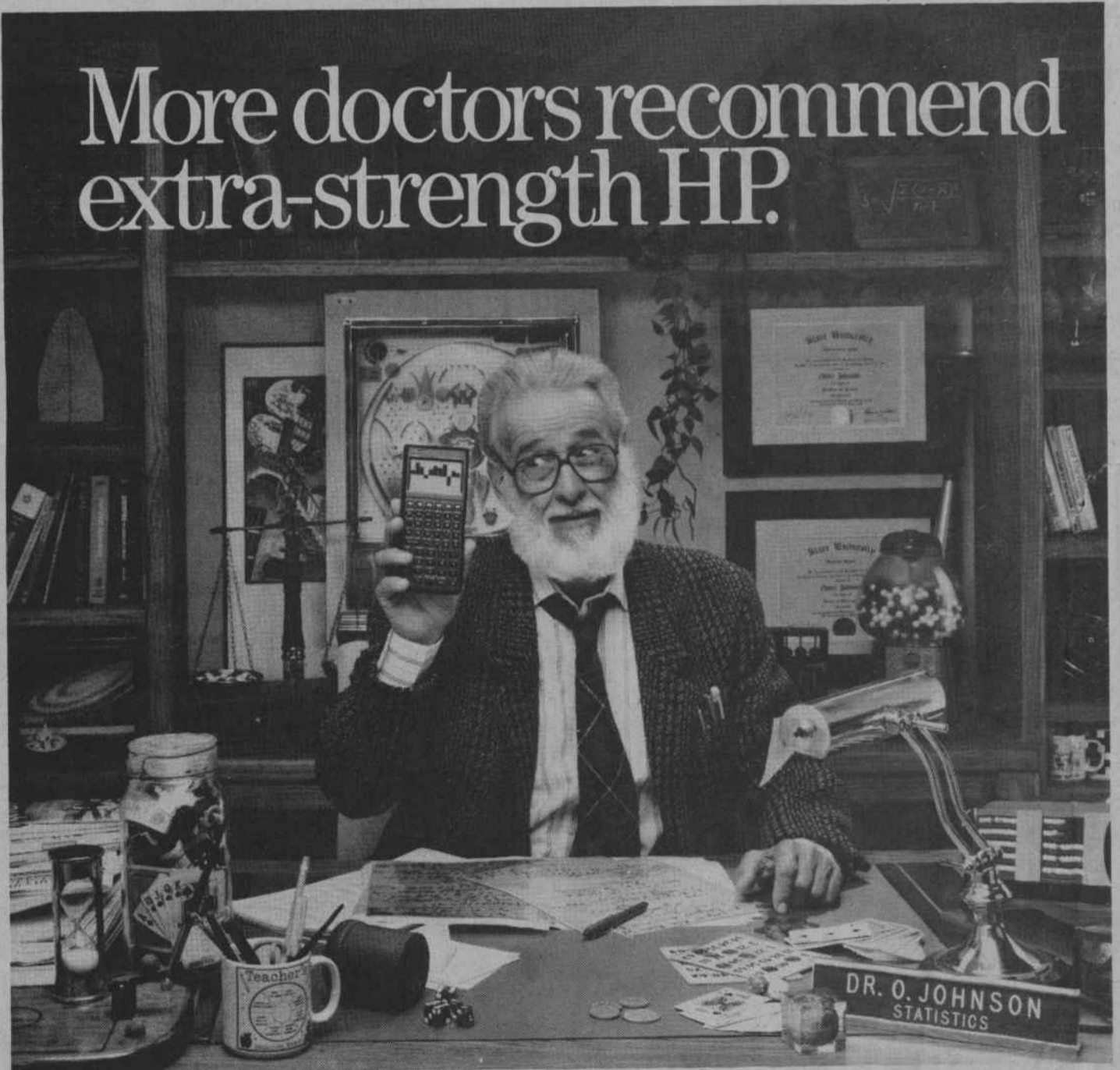
Compton emphasized that the theater department will be busy

with many performances that are not mainstage. "A tremendous amount of theater goes on around here all the time," he said.

In particular, the improvisational group *We're Not Your Mother's Players* has attracted a loyal following in the Columbia area since it formed in the spring. The group usually performs late nights at Trustus and the 50-seat Bensch Laboratory Theater near Batt House.

The student group Puppet Rime will be doing a production this fall, but the date and nature of this performance has not been settled.

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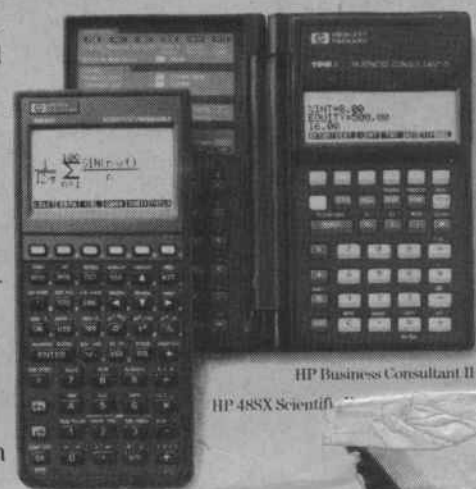
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