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Questories
New Plays Festivals
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THE HIT OF THE QUESTORS FESTIVAL

FIFTEEN festivals of new plays is a fine record for any company, and the Questors in Ealing has every right to be proud of this year's offerings. The hit was Harry Martin's [sic] "**A Borderline Case**," which is that 1974 rarity, a play by an Irishman about Ireland which is genuinely funny, honourable while being passionate, and which makes its sharp, sharp point in one superb coup de théâtre up to which the whole action has been leading with the utmost subtlety.

This is a "stagey" play, using a whole bag of tricks, some of which are presumably the director's (Carol Wiseman). There are only six characters, two of whom play all the others from their respective sides of the Eire-Ulster border. Nominally, the play is about the son of a Protestant dean in Dublin going home with the girl who has had his child but flatly refuses to legalise the relationship. The time, again nominally, is 1944. In every sense of the word, lovers, parents and all with whom they come into contact proceed to compromise. It lasts for only two hours, but has no need of padding

"Crincum Crancum," John Norman's play last year, was a large-scale historical work, revolving around the insanity of George III. "Journey" earlier this year was a more compact affair, with three parts only, and the new play "**The Owi-Winged Faculty**" is not far off being a full-scale theatrical possibility. It is about one of the new universities, staffed by an oil and water selection of old-timers and with-its, and faced on the same day with a student revolt and the visit of a financial magnate who could, in the right circumstances, be persuaded to donate a new building.

Its principal fault is not that there is too much going on, or even that there are too many principal characters, but that Mr Norman has not yet taught himself to discriminate against the unnecessary and the trivia inherent in any plot and in any collection of characters who are not just cardboard and two-dimensional. He leaves a lot of loose ends; too many for a stage play, and far too many characters presented economically in the first instance just fade away. This play is one worth staging, if only because it is by an author who is obviously capable of learning from experience.

Wilhelm Reich has become a sort of folk hero of the sexual culture. There was a highly successful film "W.R.: The Secret of the Organism," and now Roland Bowden has written a flash-back biographical play, "**The Last Analysis**." While the Austrian scientist undergoes treatment in the Lewisburg Penitentiary in 1957, his psychiatrist's questioning reveals the influences of his melodramatic childhood, his disputes with Freud and Einstein, his unhappy marriages and his brushes with all sorts of authority, with the Communists, with Hitler's Germany and finally with the United States. The trouble is, what makes interesting reading becomes tedious when staged; the author and David Gower who directs have succeeded in over-alienation, so that I felt "ah yes, the original mad scientist" and was moved by neither the man's aspirations nor his troubles.

The programme tells us that this is Mr Bowden's eleventh play, but the first one to be staged. At the moment, he is writing statements rather than dialogue, and seems afraid to permit a little warmth to creep into his characters.

Anne Morley-Priestman.