Subtle Humor Is Nightly Face Of Hamlet Theatre

By JOE PARSONS

The Hamlet Theatre is a little place on Richmond Avenue, so little in fact that you'd miss it if you weren't careful. Go in, and your first impression is that it is just one of the myriad lounges that abound all over town with candle-topped tables and a bar at one end. What sets it off is the raised platform in the center of the room and the props for the play.

THE BILL advertised "Three Wild Comedies," and that they certainly were. The first one, a piece by Lawrence Ferlinghetti entitled "The Alligation," was a fast-moving musical about a Southern Lady who had a pet Alligator named Shooky.

She treated Shooky like one of the family, but it seems that Shooky wanted more than that—he wanted to be emancipated. Such a situation could only lead one to bloodshed.

The second play, a fast, witty one called "So Much a Month Plus Utilities," was by Ned Bobkoff (who, incidentally, is the Managing Director of the Hamlet). It dealt with a young artist (named Whistler?) and his landlady-to-be who sat in a rocking chair.

The play was full of sophisticated poking fun at modern society. Like "Alligation," it wasn't meant to be uproarious, but rather subtly funny. It made the grade as the best offering of the evening.

THE LAST PIECE was a one-act by Eugene Ionesco, "The New Tenant." Its subject was a newly-leased apartment in a large English city, and its deliberately silly, non-sensical manner. This was the only play of the evening which was not pleasant, as well as all those were, to be a highly sophisticated comedy.

The director, however, fell into the trap of the tried and true, and instead of introducing slapstick; the result was a play which started out strongly, but began to drag when the pie-throwing started.

YOU NEVER know really what any of the comedies are all about. All three have essentially an unfaithful quality. Their situations are not simple, nor is anything else simple about them. Their strength lies not in the run-of-the-mill funny situations, but rather in what the characters themselves are doing. You might not understand exactly what they're doing, because they are unusual; you might feel cheated, because you feel like you don't quite know what is going on.

But they are funny.

And then there was the beer.