'You blocks, you stones' . . .

By ROGER GLADE

For quite some time, it has apparently been the attitude of the Rice Administration that the Fine Arts are the stepchildren of society, suitable only for keeping the poorer misfits busy and out of the way of the pioneers of the brave new world.

Indeed, until this year it was a question of dubious nature to ask if the University so much as recognized the existence of such a set of disciplines. However, with ever-expanding facilities and an ever-expanding curriculum, Rice has, in the past year, evidenced to a large extent a valid desire to live up to its name. In short, the University has made progress.

It is disgusting that the Rice Student Body hasn't done the same.

Apathy Stifles

The problem of the "culture-mongers" on the Rice campus is essentially the same as that of the "political activists," the "professional do-gooders," the "student government," and the "God-lovers." Simply stated, it is apathy.

The Rice community is potentially a fruitful ground for most, if not all, of the "finer things in life," but the ordinary student (be he engineer, academ, or jock) has chosen to bury his head in the bog and come up for air only to complain of the stifling atmosphere.

Far too long have we heard muttered complaints regarding cultural events on the Rice campus. Far too long have we heard these complaints from the people who, if they cared, could do much to aid the situation. The atmosphere can be improved only so much by money and facilities. The "culture-mongers" are only finite in number. The only way the students are going to get anything better will be to exert the necessary pressure.

The University is not, contrary to rumor, deaf, dumb, and blind. The Rice Players proved this when they instituted a campaign of constant pressure for a director-in-residence. They proved this by evidencing actual student interest in drama. Rice gave them what they wanted. It will do so again and again, but not without reason, and not without a request from those who care.

No Response

The net result of the situation is dissatisfaction. Those who perform are dissatisfied with the reaction, those who react are dissatisfied with the performance. The Fine Arts department holds an exhibition and few attend. If the exhibition is bad, those who hate it don't complain; they chalk their tongues and say, "well, that's the way of it." If it is good, nobody notices.

The Players perform for an audience of 100 off-campus adults. The show is wretched. There is no reaction from the students. The next night the performance is good and the audience is 500 — the same off-campus adults with their high school children. As far as Rice is concerned, it might as well not have happened, except for a hopefully conscientious reviewer who tells the world, four days after closing, that it did.

Involvement Needed

The problem is not communication. The Shepherd School of Music posts notices of concerts. The Players (to the ire of some) fill box after box with junk mail. The bulletin boards are awash with speakers, performances, exhibitions, and ambitious college programs which come, essentially to naught. The populace (or those who care) complains but exerts no pressure.

The cultural explosion at Rice of the past four years will continue, if only because of the momentum the school has achieved. More illiterate engineers and ignorant Shakespeare scholars will graduate. But until the time when tomatoes are thrown at a bad Player production and orchids flung amid "bravos" to a grand Shepherd recital, the Rice student should not be satisfied.

The potential is there. The students have no excuse for just complaining in whispers. The Players, the Symphonic Society, and the Fine Arts Department have proven they can do excellent as well as abhorrent work.

The students except for the "culture-mongers," have demonstrated that the fault for the remaining wastes in the "Cultural Desert" rests squarely on their own hunched shoulders.