

Cowboy Whores

A One Act Comedy by Charles Reuben
(247-2095 Home/277-5921 Work)

Directed by Andrea Bongiorno (892-1780)

*Also starring: Joseph Kozak, Sanjeev Jain, Kriya Kaping,
Tabitha Hall, Diego Gonzales, David Brown, Joshua Narcisso
and Jodi Fitzgerald*

*To Be Performed on Thurs., March 27 & Sat., March 29, 1997
at 7:30 p.m. in the Experimental Theatre at Popejoy Hall*

Final Version: March 26, 1997

A Play Written for "Dionysus: In-The-Round"

Charles Reuben
1308 Orchard Pl. NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104

Variety marks UNM's 2nd series of short stage works

"We are the chorus, the UNM chorus, we introduce Dionysus, chosen with prudence, three unemployed students, what do you want at these prices?"

— Digby Wolfe's lyrics to the musical theme opening the festival

BY DAVID STEINBERG
Journal Staff Writer

The second year of the University of New Mexico's festival of playlets and other short pieces for the stage — titled "Dionysus in the Round" — opens this week.

No single work is longer than 40 minutes and most are well under that limit, which the festival's artistic committee imposed.

Each of the festival's six shows has a mix of drama, comedy, satire and dance. Several have performance art.

"One thing we are trying to go for is variety, and I think we achieved that," said Jeremiah Sullivan, a playwright and a member of the festival's artistic committee.

Many of the plays last year revolved around student life, said Patricia Connelly, the festival's producer. Less so this year.

Variety is clearly a quality of the initial show of the 1997 festival, which opens the marathon series Wednesday and Friday. There's Connelly's "Sense and Nonsense," a parody of "Sense and Sensibility." Ian Helms' "Heavy Petting Zoo" has a couple in bed, and there's a musical spoof of "Evita."

The second show has Charles Reuben's comedy "Cowboy Whores," about the college bureaucracy, a dance by Gauri Vanarase and a musical piece called "Frontier Blues."

"We didn't want to do it as a broad open submission festival like the Humana Festival. We wanted it to be about the work of the students in the Theater and Dance Department," said Sullivan, a UNM undergraduate.

The artistic committee, which consisted of two members of the Department of Theatre and Dance faculty, Digby Wolfe and David Jones, and 12 UNM students, split up to evaluate the 150 works UNM students submitted. They judged the works using four criteria: story, characters, ability to be produced and originality.

"We asked the committee to think about each work if you would produce it in a theater or pay to see it — all from a workshop sense. We

"Dionysus in the Round"

WHEN: Show No. 1 is 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Friday; Show No. 2 Thursday and Saturday; Show No. 3 April 2 and 4; Show No. 4 April 3 and 5; Show No. 5 April 9 and 11; Show No. 6 April 10 and 12.

WHERE: Experimental Theatre, Basement of the Center for the Arts, UNM

HOW MUCH: \$5 general public, \$3.50 students and seniors at the UNM box office or ProTix outlets. Call 277-4JOY or 851-5050. Call 277-4332.

are not expecting them to be completed and polished," Sullivan said.

Approximately one third of the submissions were chosen for staging at the festival.

Connelly, who is also directing a play, said most of the works are geared for patrons who are teenagers and older.

"Some of the pieces might work for children, but I'm telling people who call that it's really for older audiences," she said.

UNM Art Department students are also participating in the festival. They have created what Sullivan described as "a mural tunnel running the length of the hall from the staircase to the basement to the entrance to the X Theater. It's a ceiling-to-floor mural. You walk through it."

Here is a list of the pieces in the first two shows.

Show No. 1: Jessica Clarke's "Even If I Was Standing at the Window," Maureen Cooke's "Rats," Connelly's "Sense and Nonsense," Sullivan's "End of Journey," Flame Bojangles Nightky's "Tell," Drew Groves' "Habit," a dance by Marsha Tallerico, and a musical piece, "Evita: The Sequel (Madonna with Child)."

Show No. 2: Reuben's "Cowboy Whores," Jan Curry's "Woman and Man," Lisa Railsback's "Bring Me the Moon," Carlos Chavarria's "Mind Struggle," Amy Helms' "Drainage," Vanarase's dance piece, and the satire "Frontier Blues."



Joseph Kozak (right) confronts Diego Gonzales while Krya Kaping looks on in Charles Reuben's "Cowboy Whores," directed by Andrea Bongiorno.

"DIONYSUS IN THE ROUND," A FESTIVAL OF SIX ORIGINAL WORKS BY UNM STUDENTS CONTINUES TONIGHT AND SATURDAY, AND WEDNESDAY THROUGH APRIL 12, IN THE EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE, UNM CENTER FOR THE ARTS.

COWBOY WHORES

By Charles Reuben (247-2095 home; 277-5921 work)
Directed by Andrea Bongiorno 892-1780

The Players:

BEN (Joseph Kozak, 836-9609)

Tough, cynical copy center manager who runs a one-man shop at the School of Engineering in a large University. He is about 29 years old and dresses casually.

DEAN MUHAMMAD (Sanjeev Jain, 232-7508)

Dean of the School of Engineering. He is in his 50's and has a thick East Indian accent. He is dressed in an immaculate black three-piece suit.

SALLY (Kriya Kaping, 291-9665)

Young fine arts student. Works for campus police. Dressed in full uniform.

PEGGY (Tabitha Hall, 265-2706)

Ben's immediate supervisor, Peggy has been a bureaucrat her entire life. She is in her 60's and near retirement. She is elderly, high strung and a little absent-minded.

CARLOS (Diego Gonzales, 246-1631; Pager 875-7939)

Streetwise gangster type with thick Hispanic accent. Sexy tough-guy image.

ZEKE (David Brown, 872-4946)

Young fine arts student. Unkempt, Bohemian artist.

TOM (Jody Fitzgerald, 255-8053)

Field engineer for Kodak. He fixes the copy machines. He wears a suit and tie.

ENGINEER (Joshua Narcisso, 925-0873)

Young engineer with pocket protector, thin tie, black framed glasses, white shirt and black pants

THE COPIER

Seductive, calm female voice

THE PLACE

A small copy center at a large university, specializing in the making of color copies. On one side of the stage is a desk, chair, lamp and telephone, where Ben sits, laboring over accounts. Opposite Ben is the color copier, or a B&W duplicating machine dressed up to look like an expensive color copier. Other props may be used by the director as well, such as binding equipment, a paper cutter, reams of paper and a lightboard, but care should be taken not to block audience visibility. Ben keeps busy throughout the play making copies as required, shifting reams of paper from place to place, cutting large sheets of paper to size and registering color on the light board.

PIANO MUSIC: "Buffalo Girls Won't You Come Home Tonight?"

Ben and the Dean are standing by the copy machine, engaged in conversation.

DEAN

....Ben, As the new dean of the engineering department, I want you to know that if there is anything I can do for you, you need only ask.

BEN

That's very kind of you. I'm amazed you would find the time to concern yourself with the welfare of a lowly copy center clerk. Hell, I'm surprised you even know I exist.

DEAN

Manager, Ben: Your official title is manager. And you're part of my department: Of course I am concerned about your welfare. I admit, up to now I really didn't know you even existed, but it's budget slashing time and I was mildly curious to see what was going on back here.

BEN (Frustrated)

Don't worry, the school of engineering is getting its money's worth, and then some. [Confidentially] You know: Somebody really ought to tell the Personnel Department that I'm a manager, Dean Muhammad. They've got me pegged as a clerical specialist, one of the lowest paid clerical descriptions at the university. Hell, everybody knows I'm more than just a "clerk."

DEAN

You know Peggy is working on that, Ben.

BEN (Doubtfully)

I'm not so sure about that, Mo...Do you mind if I call you "Mo?"

DEAN

Everybody does. Why wouldn't you?

BEN

Because I feel kinda funny calling you "Mo." Y'know what they say: "Familiarity breeds contempt." [Pause] So, you've been telling me that you have an open door policy and, correct me if I have this wrong....you just said, and I quote: "If there is anything I can do for you, you need only ask."

DEAN

Yes. Yes, I did say that.

BEN

OK then: Let me be frank and get right to the point. I want to "come on board," Mo.

DEAN

What do you mean, "come on board?" You are on board!

BEN

Then why, in heaven's name, am I still a temporary employee at the University after eight months? When I was hired as a full-time employee....when I left my previous full-time job....I was assured that I would be a "temp" for only as long as it took for Peggy to process my paperwork. That was eight months ago!

DEAN (Puzzled)

I must tell you this all comes as a complete surprise to me, Ben. I always thought you were "on board."

BEN (He gradually heats up)

Looks that way, doesn't it? I have my own office, my own business cards, two phone lines, voice mail, a fax line and Internet access. I run my own department. I can buy just about anything I want, I have a huge budget, I handle hundreds of dollars each day and thousands of dollars worth of accounts each week....and I'm still a temp! I cater to the color copy needs of the entire University, not just the School of Engineering, I do all the billing, I fix the machines when they break down....and I'm still a temporary worker! After eight months! I mean, the University says you can only be a temp for six months! What in hell is going on here?

DEAN (Calming him down)

Ben! You've been a great success and made a great impression on the entire university. When the school of engineering bought the color copier we had no idea that other departments would want to use the machine, as well. I keep telling people that, contrary to popular belief, the purpose of the School of Engineering is not to supply the rest of the University with color copies. We bought the color copier for our engineering students! Who would have thought that every other department on campus, from the art department to

DEAN (Continued)

zoology would want to make copies here as well? But what are we to do? Throw them out? Other departments must come to understand that they are only guests at the School of Engineering. [Pause] But that matter aside, I swear to you, Ben: I genuinely thought you were "on board."

BEN

"On board? On board?" What is it with this "on board" stuff, anyway? Why do people around here talk in maritime metaphors? Is this University a ship lost at sea? Are we floundering in an ocean of confusion? Damn! I feel like I've been thrown to the sharks. I get no medical insurance, no benefits and no vacation. I mean, what's the deal?

DEAN

Why wasn't I told about this before?

BEN

Well, I hesitated to go above Peggy's head. But I'm beginning to think I'm being taken advantage of. Something inside of me is crying out for justice. I can't take much more of this.

DEAN (Reflecting)

Eight months as a temp? That is a long time.

BEN

A very long time. A significant portion of my life. As a temp, I have lost two weeks vacation time! Imagine, if you will: Two weeks vacation totally shot to hell! You wouldn't put up with this. Why should I?

DEAN

I'm going to look into this right away, Ben. I'll get back to you when I find out what's going on.

BEN

Thank you. Y'know, I give this place my heart and soul. I'd feel much better knowing I'm "on board."

DEAN

I'll see what I can do.

(Exit Dean. Enter Zeke.)

ZEKE

Say, I heard you guys make cheap color copies.

BEN

There ain't no "you guys" here. Just me. My name is Ben. And you are....

ZEKE (Irritated)

Does it really matter who I am? I just came here to make some color Xeroxes.

BEN (Smugly)

They're not called "Xeroxes." Xerox is the name of a company and I run a Kodak shop here. All my machines are made by Kodak. Anyway, you want a "copy," not a Xerox. And yes, I want to know who you are: I want to know everything about you.

ZEKE

Why? You with the FBI?

BEN

No. But we don't charge tax here, see? So I can only work with students, faculty and staff of the university. Do you have any idea what would happen if my cheap color copy prices leaked out to the general public?

ZEKE

No. What would happen?

BEN

Every realtor and art gallery owner would be begging to be let in. I can't handle that kind of volume. I say, let 'em go to Kinko's!

ZEKE

Well, I'm neither a realtor or art gallery owner. I'm a poor, destitute student and I can't afford to go to Kinko's.

BEN

And what department are you with?

ZEKE

I'm with fine arts. I'm studying photography.

BEN (To the audience)

Oh Jesus, another fine arts student.

ZEKE (Irritated)

Look, if you don't want my business, I can just take it elsewhere.

BEN (Angrily, Loudly)

Go ahead! Take it to Kinko's! See if I care! You know and I know they won't copy but one picture from your book. They're out to make money. They don't want to struggle over cropping the picture and getting it just right for 75 cents. They want you to give them a flat sheet of paper and copy it 3,000 times for an exorbitant price. You're here because you heard that I will copy more than one picture from a book without crying "copyright violation" and because I'm cheap.

BEN (Continued)

So don't threaten me by saying you'll take your work elsewhere. There is nobody else to take it to, and you know it. We have a saying here at The School of Engineering: Don't make a threat unless you're prepared to follow through with it.

(There is a moment's silence as Ben and Zeke stare at each other.)

BEN

You alright?

ZEKE

I'm fine. I'm just not used to being treated so roughly.

BEN

Sorry. Consider it part of your education. I'm just fighting an on-going battle to gain a little respect and a living wage.

ZEKE

How can you afford to run these machines so cheaply? It's like you've got a garage of Ferrari's stabled here---Top of the line!

BEN

You wanna know why I'm so cheap? You really wanna know? Practically no overhead on the labor! [Confidentially] It's all politics at the University: Who you know. Squeaky wheel gets the grease. Problem is: I don't squeak any more. I either roar and get fired or I curl up into a fetal position and become invisible.

ZEKE (Trying to understand)

So, you're saying that your cheap wages allow you to charge so little?

BEN

Yup! That and volume sales! I try to take care of the whole university. All by myself! Does your art department allow other departments to just waltz in off the street and use their equipment? Hell no! But we do. And we do it because.... [Pause, then dramatically] Because we here, at the School of Engineering, are in the business of building bridges. In the end we're just the dean's private copy center, that's all. I'm not Kinko's. I don't try to be Kinko's. And I sure as hell don't want to be treated like somebody who works at Kinko's. [Pause] So, what you got?

ZEKE

I've got a picture by Norman Rockwell I need Xeroxed....I mean "copied."

(Ben Hoists book on glass, fiddles with controls and turns to Zeke)

How big do you want it? BEN

Oh, I dunno! Big. ZEKE

How big is big? BEN

Oh, y'know: BIG! ZEKE

BEN (Frustrated)
Jesus Christ. What do they teach you over there anyway? Didn't anybody ever teach you how to size art? Can you say "percentage?" OK, look....how about if I just fill the page with the image. Would that be alright?

Sure, that's fine! ZEKE

(Copy is made)

Damn! That looks better than the original! ZEKE

That's why they keep coming back for more. Certainly isn't my engaging, magnetic personality. BEN

Definitely not! ZEKE (Under his breath)

So: How many more do you want: A thousand? BEN

No, one's just fine. ZEKE

Hardly worth turning the machine on for just one copy. BEN (Grumbling)
Alright then, that'll be 75 cents.

Thanks. I'll be back for more. And I'm going to tell everybody! ZEKE

Yeah, that's what I'm afraid of. BEN

(Zeke takes the copy, but leaves the original. Exit Zeke)

BEN (Calling after Zeke)
Hey! You forgot your original! Oh well, he'll be back. They always come back.

(Peggy comes storming into the copy center. She is very upset.)

PEGGY
I cannot believe what you've done!

BEN
Is there a problem, Peggy? You look distraught.

PEGGY
Oh yes, there's a problem---I'm furious with you!

BEN
What's wrong?

PEGGY
What did you tell the dean?

BEN
He asked me if I had any problems. I told him I was tired of being a temp and wanted to "come on board" as a regular, full-time employee.

PEGGY (Venomously)
You know I've been working on it.

BEN
You've been working on it for eight months! But what am I to do? Complain to temporary services? They'd just terminate my assignment! I like this job. I want to stay here. But it really sucks that I don't have any benefits! You wouldn't stand for it, why should I?

PEGGY
Do you realize that it takes over 20 pounds of paperwork in order to hire a full-time employee? Over 200 people applied for your position and Affirmative Action says that I must justify why I rejected every single applicant! That means I have to sort through two tons of references, applications and resumes. Plus, it's budget time and I have other things to think about, like my Hawaiian vacation, which is only a week away! I'm absolutely speechless that you would go over my head, after everything I've done for you!

BEN
This isn't about you. I didn't mean to get you in trouble. I just wanna get on board. Being a temp is like being a second class citizen. We have no health care. We get no vacation time. If you get sick, your income ceases. So, when the dean asked if there was something wrong, I simply told him....

PEGGY (Interrupting)

Told him what? That I didn't process your paperwork?! That I purposely delayed your hire? That I have a personal vendetta against you? (Pause) And to add to all my other problems, I've been accused of being prejudiced against the black temp who preceded you. Imagine that, will you? Calling me prejudiced? Why, I don't have a prejudiced bone in my body! [In a paranoid tone] But take a good long look around you. You're surrounded by hateful, spiteful people. They want to get rid of me. Do you know why?

BEN (To the audience)

I can't imagine. Let me guess. Could it be incompetence?

PEGGY (Sharply)

What did you say?

BEN (Correcting himself)

Incontinence! There was a rumor going around that you had bladder problems.

PEGGY

No. They want to get rid of me because I'm old! Imagine that! Why I'm sharper than I was 20 years ago. And I know this place backwards and forwards. I'm a bureaucrat. I've done this my whole life. I don't know anything else. They can't do this to me.

BEN

Well, maybe it's just time to consider retirement.

PEGGY

I'll die if I retire. This university is all I've got. I'm suing them for age discrimination, you know. And I'll win. You'll see. I have the best lawyer money can buy. And I suggest you watch your step, young man. A temp can be snuffed out easier than a smoldering cigarette butt. I'm doing everything I can for you.

(Peggy stomps out. Zeke returns, carrying a handicap tag.)

ZEKE

Hello! I've returned!

BEN (Snapping out of his reveries)

So I see.

ZEKE

Look, I've got this little job here: I'll pay you cash. No receipt's necessary. Understand?

BEN

Not quite.

(Zeke holds out the handicap tag.)

ZEKE

I want you to copy this for me. Better yet, give me 20 copies.

BEN

I can't do that. This is a handicap tag! The answer is no, I won't copy that.

ZEKE (Disgusted)

All right. If you're going to make a federal case about it....Just forget it. Jesus!

BEN

Well, it is a federal crime to make copies of such things. But copying handicap parking tags? I mean, how low can you go? My mother has one of these! My mother and her bad hip could be bumped from a prime parking space if I copied this....by a perfectly healthy looking young man, no less! You should be ashamed of yourself!

ZEKE

All right! All right already! Save your sermon for someone who gives a shit! I'm outa here!

BEN

Yeah! Go on! Git! Shoo! I'll call the police if I see you again.

(Zeke exits. Enter Mexican student named CARLOS. Looks around apprehensively.)

CARLOS

Buenas Tardes. Is this the Casa de Color Copias?

BEN

In a manner of speaking, yes.

CARLOS

You make the color copies, si?

BEN

Yes. Yes I do.

CARLOS

How much you gonna charge to make one color copy?

BEN

Seventy-five cents.

CARLOS

OK. You make color copy of this.

(Carlos hands Ben a certificate.)

BEN

I can't copy this! It's a passport!

CARLOS

Mexican passport. Need copy. Very important. Mother, father and 14 children want to come to land of the free, home of the brave. Need to make a color copy. Need now.

BEN

No! I can't do it. If you keep this up. I'm going to have to call the police!

CARLOS

OK. I understand. You no call police on Carlos!

(Phone rings)

BEN

Hello? [Pause] OK. I'll be right over. [To Carlos] I have to pick up some work at the Dean's office. I'll be right back.

CARLOS

Wait! I have picture of my mother I want you to shoot for me. That OK?

BEN

Sure. No problem, Carlos. I'll be right back. Don't touch anything.

(Exit Ben. Carlos looks around him, then lifts up lid of copier and makes 10 copies of his passport. As he is finishing up, a beautiful, young female student named SALLY walks in. Carlos jumps in surprise and collects his passport and copies. Sally stares at him in disbelief.)

CARLOS

Oh! You surprised me!

SALLY (Very warmly)

You surprised me! Are you the person who makes the color copies?

CARLOS

No! I'm not the color copy man! He's gone to the dean. He won't be back for five minutes! You come back then!

SALLY

All right. Whatever you say.

(Exit Sally. Enter Ben, carrying a job.)

BEN

What else can I do for you today?

CARLOS

Old picture of my mother. You shoot it. BIG please.

BEN

How big?

CARLOS

Oh, you know, big!

BEN (Frustrated)

Right, big. No problem. Big coming up. (Ben shoots picture)

CARLOS (Checks out copy)

Oh! That's beautiful. Better than original!

BEN

That will be 75 cents.

CARLOS

But face of mother a little green. (Offended) How could you do this to my mother! My mother, my momasita, who brought me into this world, who suckled me at her breast....I give you 50 cents.

BEN

Fine. 50 cents. I swear: You Mexican students redefine Jewish stereotypes.

CARLOS (In his face)

What you say? What you say, Gringo?

BEN (Irritated)

I said: Hit the road, Jack.

CARLOS

What that mean, "Hit the road, Jack?"

BEN

It means: Thank you for your business.

CARLOS

Gracias Hombre.

BEN

Adios Amigo.

(Carlos sees Sally and checks her out. Whistles, mutters to himself in Spanish [ad lib] and exits. Re-enter Sally.)

SALLY

You run a pretty liberal ship here.

BEN

Why do you say that?

SALLY

The guy who was here before. He shot ten copies of his passport while you were gone.

BEN (Genuinely surprised, angry)

No! I can't believe it! Turn your back for one minute and they'll walk all over you!

SALLY (Holding photo)

Well, maybe I can make everything all better. First off, I have this photograph of myself that needs to be blown up as big as you can make it. Do you have any problem with that?

BEN (Accepts photo. Practically drooling)

Damn! You are one fine figure of a woman. I mean no, no problem at all. (Ben shoots the picture)

SALLY

Why thank you! And will you take a look at that! Why, they're better than the original! Run one for yourself!

(Ben shoots another copy)

BEN

Cool! This goes on my refrigerator! Is there anything else I can do for you?

SALLY

No.....Well, yeah. Actually there is just one little thing. I have some hundred dollar bills that need to be copied.

BEN

Now wait a minute, lady.

SALLY

Oh, don't you worry. It's an art project: It's meant to be....wallpaper, yes that's right! wallpaper for an installation piece I'm working on!

BEN

Well, I dunno. Sounds suspicious.

SALLY

Oh C'mon. I'll let you have a few more of my photos. I'll let you have the original! Hell, I'll let you have the negatives! That should help warm you up on a cold winter night.

BEN

I really shouldn't.

SALLY

How about a date?

BEN

A date?

SALLY

Forget about the date. We'll do it right here, in your office. I'm really desperate for those copies. Besides, I wouldn't do anything illegal: I work for the campus police! How much more honest can a customer be? We are the law! (Sally places her gun on the copy machine) Besides, it's for an art project. Please! I need it! Please!

Enter Zeke. He sees the gun, picks it up and plays with it, much to the dismay of the people in the copy center.

ZEKE (Angrily)

All right, asshole. I don't need no stinking troll protecting his fucking bridge. I say what gets copied and what doesn't. And I want you to copy this handicap tag.

BEN (Losing it)

Is that the way it's going to be? Fuck it! Fine. No problem. Why should I care what gets copied or how much you're going to pay? Fine. Have it your way. Being the copy center police was not part of my job description. But if y'all want copies, you're going to pay for it, understand? You want me to copy the handicap tag? That will be \$5 a copy.

ZEKE

No problem. Go for it. Here's the cash.

(Zeke hands over cash. Ben pockets it and then begins copying. Carlos re-enters.)

BEN

And you, Carlos. This lady here, this campus police woman....she says you made copies of your passport. Is this true?

CARLOS

Carlos cannot tell a lie. Policewoman tell the truth. I feel guilty about making copies behind your back. I come back to pay.

BEN

Fine. That will be \$10 a copy. You owe me a hundred dollars.

CARLOS

Carlos gladly pay copy center guy. Here is \$100 cash. That's cheap. I expect to pay much more.

BEN (Pockets money)

Thank you very much. Now, go on, git! [Exit Carlos. To audience] Now this job is beginning to pay out! [To Zeke.] And here's your damn handicap tags: Go bug somebody else.

(Exit Zeke. Enter ENGINEER with pocket protector, thin tie, black framed glasses, white shirt and black pants)

BEN

Can I help you?

ENGINEER

Yes. I'd like a copy of this electron microscope picture. Only problem is that the colors on the original aren't quite right.

BEN

What do you mean, they're "not quite right?"

ENGINEER

Well, you see, it's like this: I've spent the last 15 years of my life collecting data that relates to the density of silicon atoms produced by gas-phase chemical vapor deposition of arsenic in a high-speed rotating CVD reactor. Do you follow?

BEN (Puzzled)

Yes, yes. I follow you. You are a man on a mission.

ENGINEER

Right. Well anyway. After 15 years of collecting data, I began using the electron microscope to confirm my thesis. Much to my surprise, the actual electron microscope pictures did not advance my theory. Instead they directly contradicted it. In other words, laboratory experimentation has proven my theory wrong, wrong, wrong! Do you see? (Engineer throws 8x10 pictures of black blobs at Ben)

BEN

I see large, fuzzy mauve blobs that signify nothing.

ENGINEER

What you see is my ruin! 15 years of work shot to hell! My wife will leave me! My children will go hungry!

BEN (Studying photos closely)

I don't understand. I still see undefined, ugly mauve blotches.

ENGINEER (Exasperated)

Let me explain: The Color is All Wrong! Experimentation.... Reality has proven me wrong.

BEN (Dramatically, Energetically)

Then we must change reality.

ENGINEER

Can you do that? I simply came here to document my failure. The blotches are mauve. They need to be on the green side. I'm ruined!

BEN

Au contraire, my friend. This will be your finest hour. (Fiddles with machine) I'll just tweak the color balance to match the data and voila! Picture and data are in complete agreement!

ENGINEER

Cool!

BEN

But it'll cost you. Say, twenty bucks a shot. You want five shots. That'll be a cool hundred bucks.

ENGINEER

A bargain at twice the price. With these color copies, I can get a 20 million dollar grant. My wife won't leave me! My children will eat! Here's the money. Forget the receipt.

BEN (Makes copies, pockets money)

Consider it forgotten.

ENGINEER

Thanks a bunch. Catch you later.

(Engineer exits. Ben reaches into pocket and starts counting money. After a dramatic pause, he addresses the following short monologue in a crazed, loud voice to the audience.)

BEN

Now this is the way to run a business! Fuck the copyright laws! You want a copy, I'll make it. How about some traveler's checks, or certificates of deposit? Postage stamps? Immigration papers? Stocks and Bonds? How about a nice driver's license today or a car title? I'm easy! Just shove a big wad of bills into my hot little hands and consider it done. OK now, who's next?!

SALLY

I'm next. Settle down. Everything's gonna be OK. I want you to shoot these hundred dollar bills. There's three on a page. I'll give you twenty dollars a copy. Make me 10 copies. Are you man enough?

BEN

No problem. If I go down, I'm taking you with me. But I got to tell you: I've never shot money before. I don't know what's going to happen.

SALLY

Knock off the sermon. Just shoot the copy.

BEN

You're the boss.

(Ben pushes the button. A loud siren fills the air. The copy machine goes dead.)

PRE-RECORD SYNTHESIZED FEMALE VOICE

Attention. Attention. Back off, please. A serious copyright violation has been detected by the Kodak 1550 plus color copier. Do not move. Put your hands in the air. You are under arrest. A special agent has been dispatched to investigate this affair.

(Copy center customers and Ben hold hands up in the air for about 10 seconds. They all look at each other. At this time, a field engineer for the copier enters (TOM). Tom looks at everybody with their hands up.)

TOM (S L O W L Y, C L E A R L Y)

Freeze! Are we playing Simon Says? Simon says, "Touch your toes!"

SALLY (Wising Up as Tom feels her butt)

What the...? You aren't the copy police!

TOM

Oh, you fell for that one? No, I just fix the copy machines. But I did stick a prerecorded microcassette in the copier during my last visit. Just a little good clean fun. As I said, I was passing by and I heard the recording go off.

(Tom opens the lid of the machine and notices the original)

TOM (Continued)

Naughty, naughty! You know you really shouldn't shoot money. Imagine if everybody made copies of hundred dollar bills. Why, the entire fabric of our economy would collapse in a matter of days. People would just come in here, pay their seventy five cents and walk away with hundreds of dollars.

SALLY

I like that idea. It's kind of like somebody finally figured out a way to make money grow on trees!

TOM

But then, you probably discovered that it wasn't that easy to do.

BEN

What do you mean?

TOM

Your copier has shut down. Its gears have totally frozen up. It won't work until I unlock it. And if you want me to unlock it, it's going to cost you.....say [looking at Sally's original] \$300.

SALLY

You must be joking!

TOM

No joke.

SALLY

This is extortion!

TOM (Laughing)

You were right the first time: It was a joke. Just don't do it again or I'll have to call the Secret Service. [Tom pushes a few buttons and re-enables the machine] There you go. Good as new.

BEN

I can't thank you enough.

TOM

My pleasure. Well, I'm off then. Duty calls. (Exit Tom)

SALLY (Nervously)

I'm outta here, too. Let's just keep this incident to ourselves, OK?

(Sally exits. Ben looks under copier lid, sees sheet with hundred dollar bills. He pull it out and displays it for the audience to see)

BEN

Hey, you forgot your original! [He stops, looks at original, peels bills off it and sticks them in his pocket]

SALLY (Popping her head back in)

I'm sorry. Did you say something?

BEN (Innocently)

No...No! Just wishing you good luck. Bye!

SALLY (Puzzled)

Bye!

(Exit Sally and Tom. Dean walks in.)

DEAN

Ben, I've got some good news!

BEN (He's almost crazy now)
I can't take it any more. I'm losing it. I'm only a shadow of the person you once hired. Get me outa this place. I'm certifiably insane.

DEAN
No you're not, Ben. You're just as normal as the rest of us. [Eagerly] Well, the good news is that you are now officially a university employee! Welcome aboard!

BEN
Ay matey, that is good news! It's good to be aboard! Smell the salty air! Gaze upon the horizon! Trim the main sheet and steady as she goes! (Pause) How on earth did you manage to accomplish this? In one morning you did more than Peggy did in eight months!

DEAN
Simple. I went over to the Personnel Department and we threw out everybody's application. Then we reposted the position with only two applicants---Yours and mine. After lengthy meditation and soul searching, I decided to keep my six figure salary. So, it turns out that you got the job.

BEN
Peggy will be furious at both of us.

DEAN
Don't worry about Peggy. I fired her.

BEN
You fired her?

DEAN
Well, I tried to fire her. It turns out she had an age discrimination suit filed against the University and it really looked as though she was going to win. So, the University made her the head of the Personnel Department. She won't be bothering you anymore. But just think, Ben: Now that you're on board, you can now get two weeks vacation time, sick leave and a week off during Christmas. All paid!

BEN
Two weeks! Why do I get two weeks and everybody else in the dean's office gets four weeks vacation?

DEAN
It seems that when you have been classified as low as you are, then you fall into the category of being represented by a clerical union.

BEN
A union? What union?

DEAN

The CWA. You see Ben: You are a member of the Cowboy Whores of America. The Cowboy Whores represent 1,500 clerical employees throughout the university. They decide your destiny, not us.

BEN

But, I'm neither a cowboy nor a whore. Why on earth would I be represented by a bunch of Cowboy Whores?

DEAN

Don't ask me. Ask labor relations. It's the rules. There's something else you ought to know, too.

BEN

What's that?

DEAN

The University has just frozen all wages. You won't be seeing any increase in your salary, I'm sorry. As a matter of fact, after they take out your retirement, health insurance, disability, Medicare, workers comp and unemployment, you may very well be making less money than you do now. But don't worry: We can arrange for you to work lots of overtime! That should make up the difference.

BEN (In disbelief)

So, are you saying that I am going to be rewarded for my services by having my salary frozen for....how long?

DEAN

It's looking like two years or so, that's all. But don't worry, now that you're "on board," you are guaranteed a two percent raise at the end of the year!

BEN

But inflation is much more than two percent!

DEAN (Proudly)

Now you're talking like a regular University employee! Welcome aboard, matey! That's how they do things around here. So what do you say? Are you going to stay "on board" or abandon ship?

BEN (Shaking his head, speaking to the audience)

Fact of the matter is, I kinda like this job. Hours are good and the people are pleasant. And since we opened this department to the whole University, we've been getting some hot women coming in here from the fine arts department. Maybe things aren't so bad. Maybe I have been acting a little crazy. And now (pause, proudly, pulling out a wad of money from pocket and counting) I'm a Cowboy Whore! (To Dean) All right, Mo: I'll stay! Who needs money, anyway?

DEAN

You can get by. You're very resourceful. All we have ever expected of you was that your department could somehow manage to break even. You've done that. The rest is your business. [Pause] What do you say we go out for lunch, Ben?

BEN

You want to go out with me: A lowly copy center clerk?

DEAN

I can understand why you might want to decline my invitation. I don't want to tarnish your sterling reputation as the "Color Copy Guy" by being seen with the Dean of the School of Engineering.

BEN

I'll get over it. You buying?

DEAN

Anything your heart desires.

(The dean put his arm around Ben and leads him offstage, as their conversation continues and eventually fades. Copy center customers emerge, with the exception of Carlos. They take over the copy shop, wildly copying and stealing props. Actors ad lib lines as they take over the stage. Enter Carlos. Other actors quiet down as he screams the following lines. He has been wounded and wears bandage and sling)

CARLOS

Where is that copy center clerk? I kill him. I yam a waiter at the Restaurante de Chupa Texas. Customer is very pleased with my service. He give me big tip. I tell him "Hit the road, Jack," and he beat me up! When I find that copy center clerk, he regret the day he make fun of Carlos! [Exit]

MUSIC: "Hit the Road, Jack"

THE END