

Gryphon  
opens July 3

"Absurd Person Singular," a New York and London comedy hit, will be the attraction by the Gryphon Theatre Company for the week of July 3 through July 8 at Georgian College Theatre in Barrie.

Written by Alan Ayckbourn, described by People Magazine as "the British bard of sex and bad marriages," the play is a fable of three married couples who give wildly disorganized parties for each other on successive Christmas Eves.

On the program these occasions are called Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future. All the parties are funny, but the Future one also has a touch of nightmare about it.

The scene is always the kitchen of each household—the playwright having observed that often the action in the kitchen during a party outshines what's going on in the living room.

Aaron Schwartz and Marcia Bennett will be seen as the Hopfrofts, the hosts for the first party, the Christmas Past. He is a merchant with dreams of becoming a real estate developer. She is an obsessive house-cleaner, who would rather be wiping off all her spotless "working surfaces" than relax with her guests in her parlor.

The second party takes place in the home of a couple—to be played by Dorothy Ann Haug and Patrick Christopher (Eva and Geoffrey)—whose marriage is collapsing. He is an architect failing in his profession but thriving in an extramarital affair, to the despair of his pill-popping wife.

She, poor wif, keeps trying unsuccessfully to commit suicide throughout her party. Her every dogged effort is frustrated unintentionally by her unperceptive guests. New York drama critic John Simon declared that "in this scene the old joke of failed attempts at self-destruction becomes supremely funny."

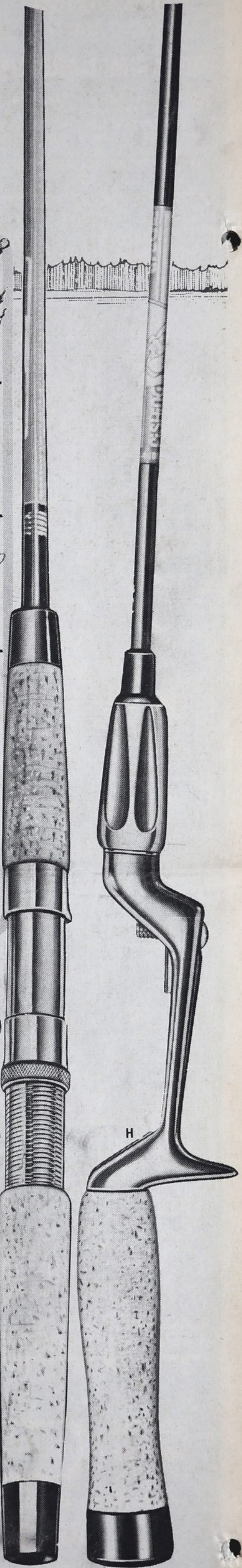
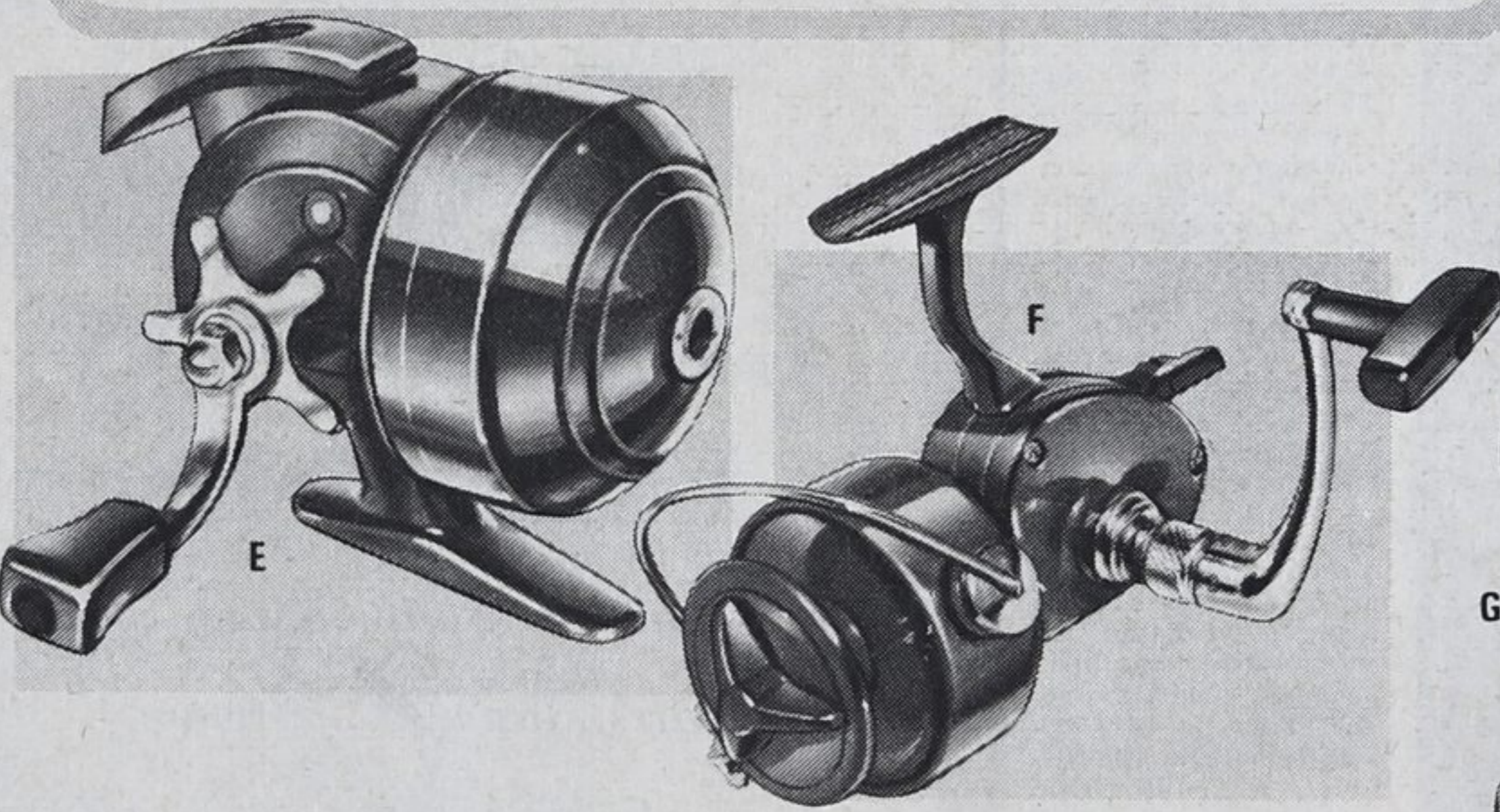
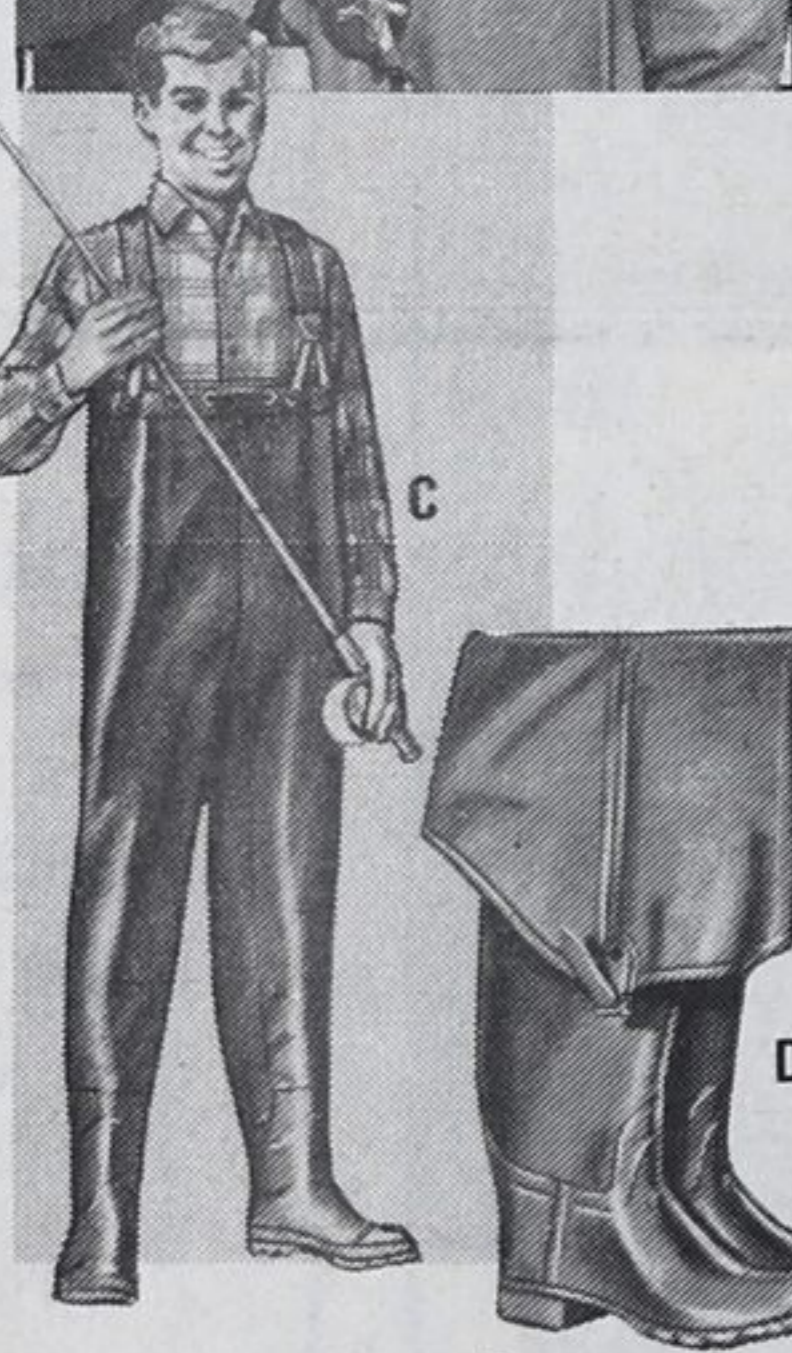
Wendy Hicks and Paul Craig (Marion and Robert), who were seen as haughty, "slumming" guests at the two earlier parties, are hosts for the third party. In the earlier episodes she was an enthusiastic drinker, but by the time that bleak Future Christmas rolls around, she has become a blowzy alcoholic, and rarely rises from her bed. Her banker-husband has also sunk into apathy. As the other two couples unexpectedly come to call, he is hibernating in a frigid house with a broken furnace that he can't get anyone to repair.

At the end, the Past, Present and Future Yuletides form a pattern of social mobility—up for some, down for others.

Vernon Chapman is the director who is taking care to keep smiles painted over this basically dismal tale so that "Absurd Person Singular" will be what it was hailed to be during its long runs in New York and London, an uproarious, knee-slapping comedy hit—"staggeringly funny" in the words of Time Magazine.

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