

arts

Karl Erikson wins audience with refreshing concert

The tall, bearded character who stepped onstage and introduced himself as Karl Erikson won over the audience from that moment on. Although playing to an extremely small crowd in SUB Theatre last Thursday, Erikson appeared not to be affected or bothered by it. He immediately established a close rapport with the audience by speaking naturally and easily, and by displaying a fine sense of humor.

He opened the concert with Tequila Sunrise, a song originally recorded by the Eagles. Throughout the concert Erikson played songs written by other individuals or groups, but the concert was predominantly his own compositions.

Erikson played a variety of music ranging from blues to bubblegum. His more serious songs he writes for pleasure and self-satisfaction, the bubblegum end of the spectrum he creates to stay alive. Born in the United States, he has lived in Canada and is now a Canadian citizen. Like most Canadian songwriters, however, he has found that to make a go of his songs, migration to the States is a necessity. Once there, Erikson found that to keep his head above water he had to write commercial, marketable, cut-and-dried songs, not the kind he prefers to write. Thus, Erikson is caught in a quandry difficult to resolve.

Erikson has a strong, even voice that does justice to anything he sings. With only his guitar and his voice he filled the theatre with resonant, clear sound. A lot of his songs, such as "Have an Angel" from the Aerogramme album, follow the pattern of starting out slowly, building to a crescendo, and falling to a quieter mood again. Others, notably his blues melodies, maintain a constant tempo throughout.

Erikson presented a refreshing, very-much-alive concert due in part to the variety of songs and the way he sang them. An energetic person, he just seems to exude life, and this came through in his music.

His songs range in theme from love to historical fantasy, from mountain walks to the Dust Bowl days in Saskatchewan. Between songs he joked with the audience, relating stories and anecdotes, thereby making the audience receptive to his songs.

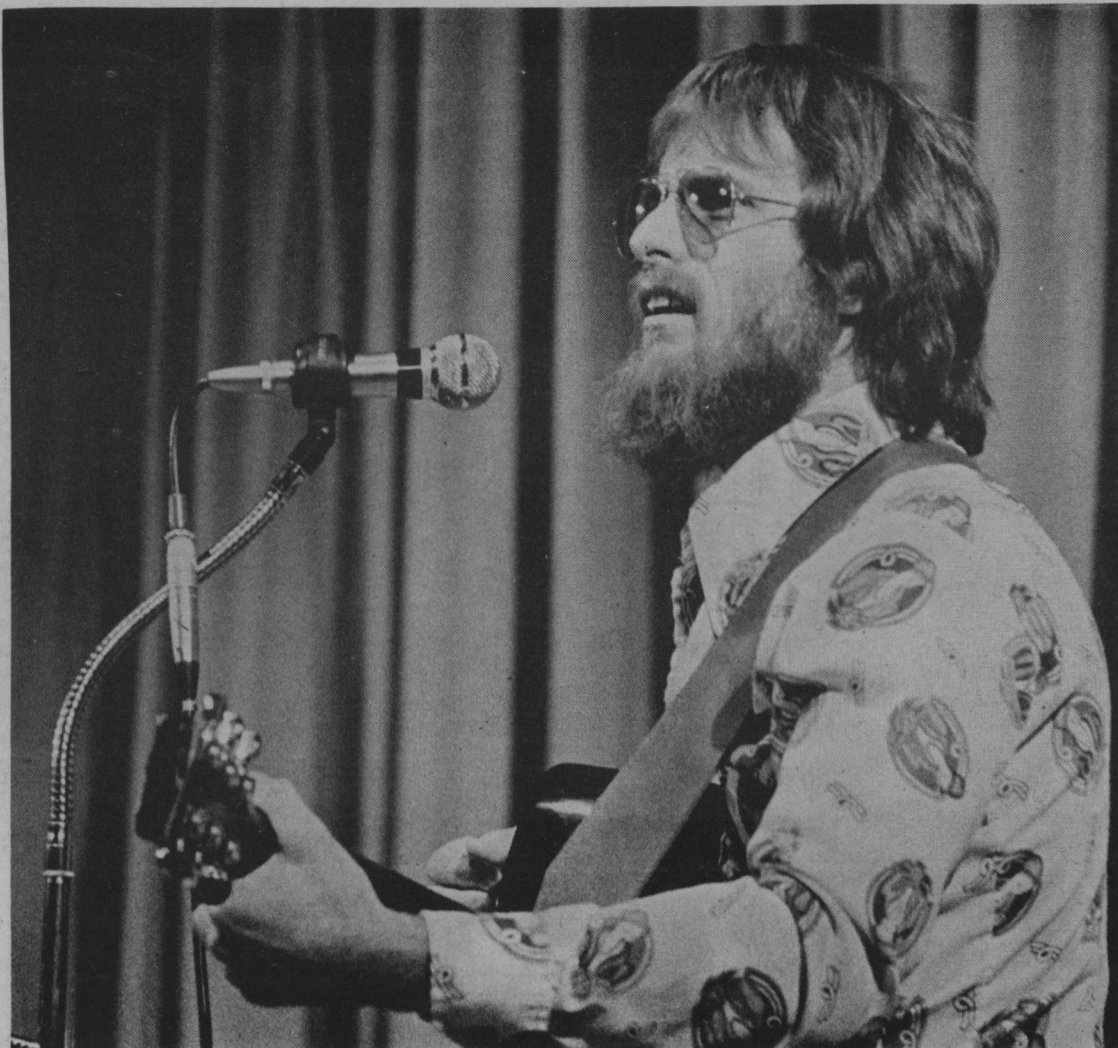
In addition to his own compositions, Erikson played a number of those written by his favorite songwriters, as well as such oft-recorded songs as Woodstock and On the Bayou. He also obliged the audience by playing his Big Three; i.e. those that have received the most attention - Enough of God, Carnival Town and Kersbrook Cottage. Erikson presented a concert that was full of life, almost exuberant and was well-received as a result.

The couple appearing with Erikson, namely Fraser and DeBolt, played a set lasting almost as long as Erikson's. Their music is, to say the least, unique, but on a completely different level than Erikson's. The male half of the team, Alan Fraser sings the melodies, while his partner Daisy DeBolt fills out the songs with corresponding harmonies. Both play guitar on a predominantly soft and folky level, with occasional haphazard outbursts.

The most striking feature of their music was the way the songs were played, and not so much the themes or lyrics. For the most part, their songs were disjointed and lacked coherence, following no discernible pattern. The guitars would start off together, drift off into separate melodies, and then converge again. The music seemed to follow trains of thought; it would play for a while, stop, and begin again in an entirely different vein within the same song.

It was basically a folk-type of format, but lacked continuity and was much the same throughout. Its uniqueness, however, did serve as a contrast to the more conventional music of Karl Erikson.

Avery Ascher



Erikson in concert at SUB Theatre.

Marshmallow comedy opens Citadel

The Citadel has uncorked its '74-75 season with a pleasant but uneven and not nearly brash enough production of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's eighteenth-century comedy *The Rivals*.

This marshmallow play parades itself with little pomp and much circumstance, its characters gingerly picking their way through a social steeplechase of leaping bon mots and verbal pratfalls, becoming so entangled in one another's affairs that in the end (and it's a long time coming) they can only rely on their own good graces and cunning wit to see them through.

In digging this puffball out of mothballs, John Neville has staged it, to a reasonable extent, in the theatrical style of the late 1700's. Not an easy task, for much of what held the stage at that time positively defied reason, or at least any sort of artistic sensibility, including a grandiloquent manner of delivery that commonly passes for action.

Necessarily, Neville and company have dispensed with such blustery bravado in their production here, for it is unlikely audiences would tolerate it beyond intermission, but they have failed to replace it with any other kind of recognizable style.

What they turn up, then, is a hybrid of various inspirations and indulgences, but no

common note that is struck in each actor's performance to draw a tether through the whole production.

Some cast performances pop and bubble like fresh champagne, and must come close to the original spirit of the piece, but others fall flat as day-old cola, some stumbling into clumsy caricature and ugly mugging. Chief victim of this lapse is a scene at the close of Act One between Acres and Sir Lucius O'Trigger, which seems interminable and is incomprehensible.

David Schurmann is always engaging as Captain Absolute, the sort of polished scoundrel you hate to love, but he is never as breezily cunning as he should be.

Absolute's heart is the glint in his eye, as he woos a young lady with an eye on the fortune he might marry into, but one can hardly suspect such cheery deceit of the captain in Mr. Schurmann's performance. He more often gives us a man confounded by the circumstance and happenstance of his life, rather than one determined and able to see that all the world becomes his stage.

Owen Foran is sure and surly as Sir Anthony Absolute, and is, along with Margaret Barton, a clear voice of professional experience and authority onstage. Ms. Barton not only manages the classic comic role of Mrs. Malaprop

with aplomb, but at the same time manages to balance a foot-high cumulus of hair on her head without toppling forward.

But brash youth takes the spotlight through much of *The Rivals*. Tom Wood is sharp as a pinch of snuff as Faulkland, a milk-sop fop who tends to whine over unrequited love and say things like: "What tender, honest joy sparkled in her eyes when we met!". Uh-huh. But Mr. Wood, with a manic face and popcorn eyes, salvages and savours the role playing it with broad farcical strokes that border on camp, and sometimes topple right in. Faulkland comes across as Harvey Korman playing Liberace imitating Jack Paar, and he is a funny mongrel indeed.

Tom Wood is proving an actor of great versatility, and particularly a fine comedian. We've had few true stage clowns in the airless theatre of the Sixties and Seventies, but there are sure flashes of that deft art in Mr. Wood's performance.

John Neville's direction is efficient, and corners of it sparkle with touches of inspired burlesque. There are a number of static scenes that destroy the sort of tumbledown momentum the play requires, especially as it races to its very typical denouement, but these are faults more in the writing than in Mr. Neville's staging.

Once again Phil Silver sweats out a set to suit the considerable limits of the Citadel's stage, and once again ingenuity and verve are his saving graces. His austere wing-and-drop setting nicely sets off the costumes, though I missed in it the sort of seedy opulence that eighteenth century theatre houses fairly dripped with.

There is more than enough in this production of *The Rivals* to remind us that high comedy has been long dead on the modern stage. Despite the efforts of Tom Stoppard and a very few other playwrights, modern comedy remains a motley, downcast genre, and this may prove glaringly apparent when the pallid humour of *6 Rms Riv Vu* arrives at the Citadel next month.

Richard Rohs

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