

Entertainment

.....Theatre UNB.....

Raw Acting: No Sets, No Props, No Costumes

by Kate Rogers

I spent last Saturday evening in an all too familiar basement classroom in Carleton Hall. Unlike most time spent in that room, I was not attending a lecture, but rather a theatre performance presented by UNB's stage left productions. The decision to transform Carleton 139 into a Cellar Theatre is an ingenious one, providing the work lends itself to a small, intimate setting. *Discontinuous*, a series of seven monologues and one triologue was the ideal show for such a venue. The layout of the room permits a type of informal interaction between speaker and audience, thus allowing the message of each piece to penetrate into the minds of the viewer.

Although there was no central theme to the show, and hence, I assume, the title *Discontinuous*, there appeared to be an underlying driving force to many of the individual pieces. All but two of the works dealt with the sense of purposelessness, lack of focus and disparity of our youth. In revolution? Greg Doran borrowed the term, *Generation X*, to refer to our age group. The following five monologues reflected the view point that we are the generation with a dim existence, an often bitter present, and an even less hopeful future. We lament about our current situations and often turn to past areas for vision and legitimacy.

Needless to say, much of

the evening had a very real, serious flavor. Some of it was downright depressing. This desperate setting could have been eliminated somewhat by changing the order of the pieces, and inserting some of the lighter works amongst the heavy ones. Yet, the order could have been very international, forcing the audience to be affected. Is this wrong? Is it so bad to move your audience to a level of discomfort if it means that you are causing them to think? And think we did -

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strong material combined with some solid performances helped carry off a show that was both entertaining and meaningful.

Much of the evening's success can be attributed to the musicians who performed interlude music throughout the show. Not only did Jeff Kerr and Mike Mattatall make the show more cohesive by linking all of the separate pieces together, they also provided a pleasant relief from the heaviness of some of the monologues. Their music was well chosen. It was a perfect variation of seventies' favorites, quality contemporaries, and great originals. The guys, accompanied by only one guitar, offered some well-blended vocals and

were a lot of fun to sing along with - as many of us did.

The overall quality of the show was relatively high. All but one of the pieces was written by UNB students. I was very impressed with how the characters were developed and how their emotions were spilled out in the written word. Matthew Teirney, Melinda Arsenault, and Nova Lea Thorne were very amusing in a cigarette? Their line delivery was tight, and their timing was perfect. Steve MacIsaac was

room full of people. The expression and sensitivity in his eyes had a way of drawing in the audience.

The one drawback to the informal setting of Cellar Theatre is that the performers often forget that they are on stage, and as a result, become a little too laid back. There is a tendency to shuffle the feet, or play with the hair, or not to speak directly to the audience. This type of movement, when used for effect, is more than acceptable. However, if it is done unconsciously or carelessly, it can take away from the quality of the performance. Although this rarely occurred Saturday night, there were a few instances, and it was distracting.

Discontinuous was the ideal example of raw acting. There were no sets, no props, no costumes. The actors depended on the quality of their work, and the delivery of its message to express themselves. Although some of the material was depressing, I don't think anyone left Carleton Hall in a discouraged state. On the contrary, I left feeling very invigorated. I had sung along with Matt and Jeff to some of my favorite tunes, laughed at some very witty, cleverly written lines, and shared intimate thoughts with some very talented performers. Most of all, I left excited with the notion that this is just the first of many production being put on by Theatre UNB and stage left. They have a full season ahead and I whole heartedly recommend that you catch some of it.

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