

# Guys and Dolls *"When they say no they really mean yes"* Kwame Dawes reads new meaning into TNB's latest production.



Get yer legs out, get yer legs out, get yer legs out fer th' lads! Get yer legs out fer th' lads!

*Guys and Dolls* is tremendous fun. TNB's production does this 1950's Broadway hit justice. The singing is wonderful, the costumes are sparkling, the use of stage is economical and yet effective, the energy and comic turns of the actors are exciting, and the audience on Thursday (albeit the \$5.00 audience) loved it. We stood up clapping at the end of the show totally drawn in by the fairy-tale beauty of the final double wedding scene, complete victims of the mysterious theatre experience called "suspension of disbelief." And undoubtedly, that was what was supposed to happen because there is a sense in which *Guys and Dolls* may be termed a

"harmless" kind of "fun" play for the family (meaning kids and all).

Yet after the show I was torn between two basic approaches that I could take in reviewing the work. I was impressed by the professionalism of the cast led by experienced leads like James Carrol (Spy), June Garba (Adelaide), Mary Ann McDonald (Sarah) and John Blackwood as (Harry); and I found some of the numbers very powerfully done by the cast especially the revivalist number which was enhanced by some lively and interestingly choreographed movements (acrobats and all). And I could go on about the things I liked about the staging, but another part of me was concerned with the script and the audience. I wondered why a script with as much "sexist" overtones with women being the basic "flesh-showers" through out, could be so popular with anineteen-eighties audience. Apparently, the producers of the show knew that the Fredericton

audience would be so impressed with the stunning energy and cute charm of the play that they would ignore the more controversial problems in the play. Either that, or they figured that this was just the right kind of play for a "conservative" Fredericton audience; a play in which it is still good advice to "marry the man today and change his ways tomorrow." For, in a day and age in which it is vogue to take old classics like *Guys and Dolls* and do interesting and subversive re-productions of them it is curious that apart from what seemed to be a change of period (the roaring twenties to the forties) the TNB production remained very committed to a "period" type piece with a few amusing changes to the lyrics from the songs. Such "purity" in the theatre may have its place, but it does make some interesting ideological statements by the mere fact of the choices made.

The plot of the play bears this out well. A woman who has been engaged to a man for twelve years wants to marry him and in the process get him to end his immoral way of life (bookie in crap games). She, incidentally is the strip-artist with a pure heart. She gets him in the end. (I can tell you this without fear of spoiling the show for you, you would know it anyway.) On the other hand a man, a gambler, wages that he can take a Salvation Army sargeant (a beautiful woamn) to Cuba. He falls in love with her and so has to try and win her. He does and they get married, (he is wearing a Salvation Army uniform in the end). For the men, the women are traps or some precious prize to be own at the end of the "battle", while for women, the men are a necessary burden that they love to bear because when they say "no" they really mean "yes", and it goes on. I know I am doing a very sketchy job, but it makes the point that the piece up-holds some of the less than appealing stereotypes about male-female relationships. It would be interesting to see a production in which the women become the "male types" and vice-versa.

But the ideological problems with the script aside, Janet Amos artistic director of Theatre New Brunswick is right when she says that "In producing shows like this one, TNB is able to bring a kind of theatre to New Brunswick that most people would not normally have an opportunity to see." Indeed this production could stand beside many of the plays I have seen on Broadway inspite of the absence of fantastic electronic technology (musts in Broadway pieces today). It stands

because of the comic timing of the players and the brisk tight pace of the action. The singers are all quite strong and where the voices seem less than excellent, the players foreground their characters forcing us to accept the oddities in their voices. For example James Carrol's singing was sometimes drowned by the chorus of strong voices, yet his Frank Sinatra styled characterization of Sly gave his performance a touch of class. (Inciden-

tally, Sinatra played Detroit in the Hollywood version.)

So, my final word on the production is that it is a great show, and anyone who wants to see a very exciting piece of silliness should go and see this play. I would like to say it is worth the \$20.00 that TNB is charging non-students, but I only paid \$15.00 and I have to say that it was worth every penny.

## THE DOUGHBOYS

Wed., Nov. 18, 1987 SUB Ballroom



Doughpersons shortly before wreaking devastation and structural havoc at the social box last Wednesday.

*The Doughboys* got off to a rousing start last Wednesday night in the SUB Ballroom. Within the first few minutes the bass player fell into the drum kit, knocked his microphone off the stage, then toppled down after it. All without missing a note. I could tell I was going to like this band.

For the next hour John Kastner (formerly of the *Asexuals*) and company delivered loud, energetic entertainment. Nothing exceptionally new or innovative, just their own brand of solid, hard-edged rock 'n' roll. Less-than-perfect acoustics and a few technical difficulties didn't really seem to matter, since their enthusiasm and humour more than carried the show.

Unfortunately not enough people attended to be able to call the event a

real success. The problem was, I think, the choice of venue. Since the Social Club hosted the show, those under 19, to whom the *Doughboys* would most naturally appeal in Fredericton, could not attend. Which is too bad, since they could probably have given the audience that extra shot of enthusiasm that would have gotten them up and dancing.

It always amazes me that any hack cover band can pack 'em in wall to wall in any local bar on any given night, while a band like this one that plays real rock 'n' roll goes by virtually unnoticed. I for one am glad I didn't miss the *Doughboys* and would easily choose them over most of the stuff that passes for music on the local club circuit.

TOM STILLWELL

## It's alive! It's alive! RHAPSODY IN BLUES

SUB CAFETERIA 20th NOVEMBER

It was blues, blues and more blues that entertained near capacity crowds at the SUB cafeteria last Friday night thanks to UNB Campus Entertainment.

Beginning at nine, the Downtown Blues Band performed to a hometown audience. Downtown Blues, as well as a few other was comprised of Hutch, John, Joan, Kevin and Joey. This group has played together recently (anyone have enough to remember Topsy, Turvy night?) and their performance of Elton John tunes, a Rickie Lee Jones tune, and of course Chuck Berry's 'Go Johnny Go' was somewhat more polished (or punished as it were). Oh, and lest we forget; Tom Waits got the royal treatment once again.

The Double Blues Band, an ensemble of many (too many to count) and various musicians from Toronto came on stage next. This band was red hot blues with songs ranging from 'Lean On Me', 'La Bamba' and some great harmonica on 'Stand By Me'. First the vocals were prominent, then the sax and trumpet, and so on and so forth. I could go on forever but I'd be talking through my hat. (Yes, do take it off Karen - Ed.) It seems the latter part of the evening became rather pleasantly hazy (dazed and confused, even). At any rate, all those lovely little coherent notes I scrawled in the dark during the performance were to no avail ... I lost them all. (for shame! - Ed.)

KAREN MAIR

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