

# One woman play an insightful character study

## Diane Flacks' energy makes *Random Acts* well worth seeing

BY DAISY KIDSTON

After seeing the one-woman play *Random Acts* at the Neptune DuMaurier Theatre, I feel affirmed in my belief that you should never stand too close to the curb in case someone pushes you into traffic. I continue to practice this belief, and if you see a strange girl standing about two metres from the curb waiting to cross a busy street, appreciate my wariness of random acts of insanity.

You see, though we try to push our lives into moulds of alarm clocks, schedules, and logic, we are at the mercy of illogical randomness. This includes the random actions and reactions of everything on and outside this planet, from the path of a vagabond meteorite to the mood of a serial killer.

In the play *Random Acts*, written and performed by Toronto-based actress Diane Flacks, we see how the life of the central character, Antonella Bergman, is changed drastically after somebody pushes her in front

of a bus. She becomes crippled and confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life.

This tragic twist is ironic in Antonella's life, as she is a well-known self-help author and speaker who motivates and inspires the public to become more forgiving and loving people. But when this terrible change befalls her life, her own words do not help at all, and she sinks into a bitter, frustrated anger which she takes out on the world around her.

Through Diane's brilliant, energetic acting, she constructs the resentful Antonella, as well as four other female characters who add insight both into the accident and the character of Antonella through the events and actions of their own lives.

There is Antonella's kindhearted, harried secretary — a mother figure who smokes pot to unwind. There is also a young lesbian fan who is suffering from a break-up with her girlfriend and clutches one of Antonella's self-help books in one hand and a bottle in the other, trying to get

through her pain. A street smart, tough, young tow truck driver brings a cool attitude to the stage, as does the young, four-month pregnant squeegee girl who witnessed the pushing of Antonella.

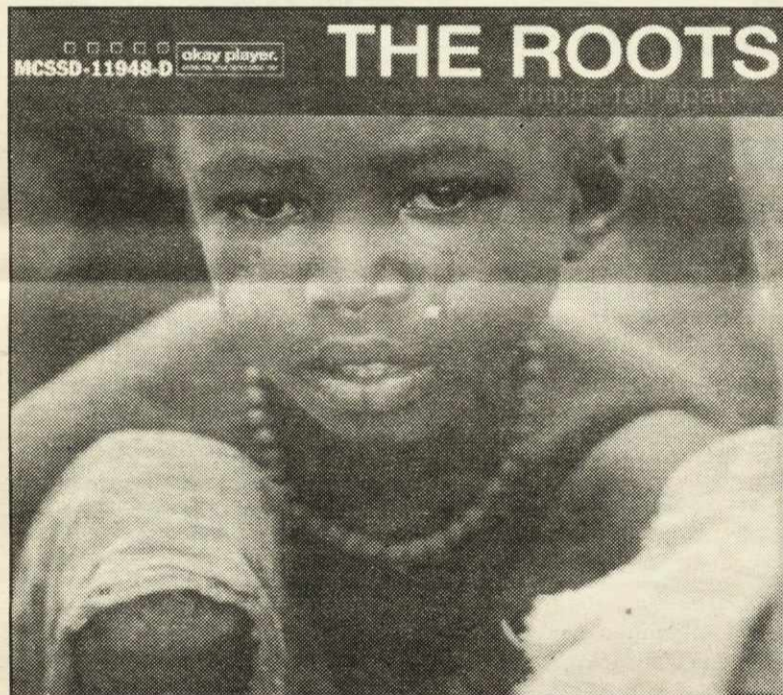
The play was extremely enjoyable and vibrant thanks to the energy and ability of Diane Flacks. She was able to convey both a sense of comedy and tragedy on stage. She flowed into the soul of her different characters effortlessly, changing accents and attitudes with polished ease.

The music played throughout the play was also very enjoyable. It changed with the mood and the situation of the characters, and added extra energy to the stage.

This play will appeal to everyone, though it may find a particular fan base with feminists, given the play is about women and empowerment. Though it was brought to Neptune's stage theatre by Halifax's Jest in Time Theatre, *Random Acts* is produced by Nightwood Theatre — a feminist company focusing on the work of female directors.



TAKING THE FLACKS: *Random Acts* of tragedy and soul.



**Things Fall Apart**  
The Roots  
Universal

The Roots have been around for a while — twelve years to be exact, although they remained relatively unknown outside Philly until their major label debut in 1995

(*Do You Want More?!!!!!!!*). They followed up this album a year later with the critically-acclaimed *Illadelph Halflife*, a groundbreaking release which is generally considered a modern hip-hop classic. The group consists of Black Thought, Questlove, Malik B., Hub, Kamal and Rahzel the Godfather of Noyze.

I was fortunate enough to see The Roots live a couple of years ago when they opened for the Fugees in Montreal. What impressed me back then was their use of instrumentals in hip-hop (not to dis-sampling or anything). They use a real bassist and drummer most of the time and are quite creative with their beats. Their lyrics are equally creative and raise issues rarely addressed in today's hip-hop.

The new album, *Things Fall Apart*, does not stray far from the formula that brought them so much success on *Illadelph Halflife*. The dialogue which kicks off the album, from Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*,

captures the essence of the album. Wesley Snipes' character wants to make music which appeals to the masses but Denzel Washington's character wants to make "real" music.

"People who feel as though, if we get off the high horse and give em what they want, there would be no need for alarm..." say the liner notes, "But what would happen if we give 'em what they need? Hmmm..."

The band seems to support Denzel's side of the argument as they refuse to retool their music to suit the masses.

Sure there are a couple of radio-friendly tracks, like the single "You Got Me", with Erykah Badu, but they don't harm the integrity of the album.

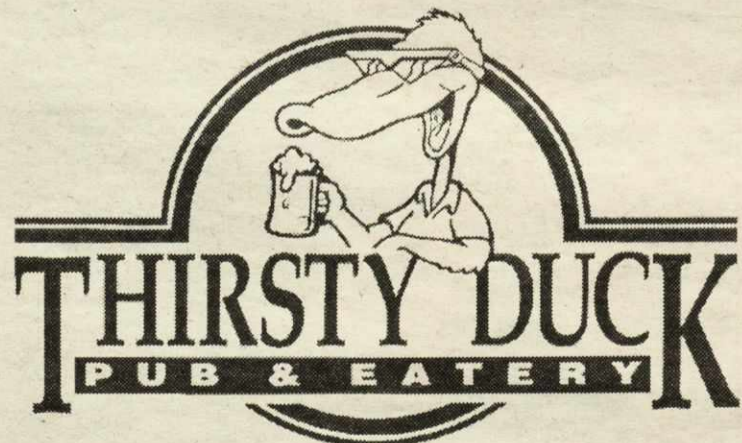
Ideas carried over from the last album, include a track from the human turntable Scratch (who, as his name indicates, makes the most amazing scratches with his vocals) and a poem by Ursula Rucker. The

strongest track on the album is "The Next Movement" with Philly's own DJ Jazzy Jeff doing the "cuttin' an' scratchin'".

The album, which hit stores Feb. 23rd, features five separate limited edition covers which depict a world in chaos. One shows a scene from a Bed-Stuy race riot in New York, another shows a burned out church; yet another shows the face of a starving Somalian child; the fourth shows the closeup of the hand of dead mob boss Giuseppe Massari clutching a spade and the last shows a badly burned infant sitting among the ruins of bombed out Shanghai shortly after a World War II bombing raid.

The Roots have released yet another solid album without letting public opinion dictate the way they make music. Although not as radically original as *Illadelph Halflife*, *Things Fall Apart* is a worthy instalment in The Roots' discography.

KARAN SHETTY



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