

Clarke is a real dandy as Oscar's Wilde

by Glenn Walton

'To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance, Phipps,' Lord Goring says to his butler in *An Ideal Husband*, but the words could be the play's author's. Oscar Wilde, effete, prone to a late romantic gushing about art, and in the eyes of the law at least, a criminal, was also a genius, and wrote the best plays of their kind in the English language. *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Lady Windemere's Fan*, etc., entertained audiences for almost a century, and along with a handful of Wilde's other writings (most notably the prose *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a letter, *De Profundis*, and a poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*) will be read and performed for as long as people delight in elegant and witty language. That Wilde was a prophet, not without honour except in his own land, adds drama to his literary accomplishments.

Wilde practically defined wit, and filled his works with glittering epigrams and social-satire, while simultaneously holding high the banner of civilization in a vulgar world. It is no wonder

that his talent and notoriety provide a natural subject for that increasingly popular genre, the one-person show. *Oscar*, conceived, directed and acted this week at the Dunn theatre by Dalhousie Theatre Department's Raymond Clarke was entirely successful in catching the hilarity and the pathos of Wilde's life.

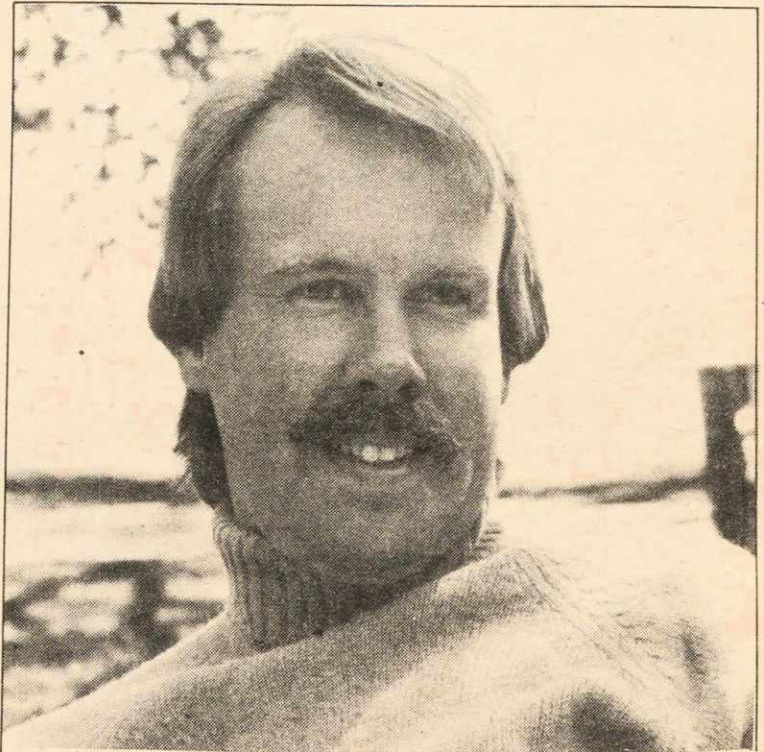
Clarke (a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, member of the Old Vic Company, founding member of the National Theatre of Great Britain, director, actor, etc) has provided the theatre season at Dal with an auspicious start.

Utilizing mainly Wilde's own writings, Clarke takes the audience on a journey that starts with Wilde's early precocity, his dizzying success on the London stage, through his abortive trials against the Marquis of Queensbury, to ultimate dissipation and death in exile in France. Clarke, whether acting Wilde himself, taking the part of narrator, or playing various parts from the plays, gets to the core of a man of wit and self-destructive over-confidence, who dares to challenge the bigotry of a century that will silence

the Love that Dares Not Speak Its Name.

The dichotomy of high-flying literary production and public disgrace provides Clarke's portrayal with a fine dramatic tension. Along with his wise interpretation of Wilde himself, other things about *Oscar* shone: Clarke's stuffy and impervious Lady Bracknell was a comic delight, and Wilde's observations on a trip to North America were of particular interest to the local audience - He lectured at Amherst (!) - and at the old Capitol Theatre in Halifax - and said that North America had not been as much discovered as "detected". Dramatic highpoints were well realized in Wilde's letter, *De Profundis*, a moving tribute to spiritual values, written from prison to his lover Lord Alfred Douglas and in Wilde's description of standing in humiliation at Reading Station in convict's clothes, being jeered at by a howling mob.

Clarke glided effortlessly between his various persona, revealing by stages the pathos behind the public dandy. When Clarke/Wilde whispered to a friend on his deathbed that they



The "Wilde" Raymond Clarke, a dramatic artist who performed at the Dunn Theatre last week.

should pretend not to hear the final trumpet when it sounds, the audience was left convinced of the truth of the stage portrayal, and at Clarke's success in bringing to life Wilde's daz-

zling talent. It is to be hoped that forthcoming productions, including a musical version of *The Canterbury Tales* in next term, can follow this classy act.

Buddy and the boys honest rock

by Michael Brennan

Buddy and the Boys have to be the most unique and honest rock band to ever emerge in Atlantic (or even Eastern) Canada. Seeing them at different times when they were playing full-time in 1979, I was positive that they could be "the" next Canadian rock band, "the" band to put a real mark in rock and roll. There were moments in their performances when the gut urgency of their songs was as strong as any of The Bands'. Every time I saw them they struggled and grew with their

music.

For a local band to attain such an expression of intensity was a wonder and if it was in my power I'd make them No.1 in America.

Then I heard they had disbanded, though supposedly not definitely. They couldn't get a record contract, they just didn't get any breaks. I was at a loss.

Fortunately, they've reunited sporadically over the past two years, usually for a few weeks at a time. They even released a great second live album (from recordings at the Misty Moon in

the spring of 1980) on their own small label. But the end seemed imminent now. If no one was going to notice them then, no one would now.

Finally, after two years, I got to see them last Wednesday night at the Moon. It was a treat. There wasn't much of a crowd for at the beginning of the week they played, but they had a capacity crowd when they backed up Doug and the Slugs over the weekend.

They should have been the main act.

Wednesday night they opened with a long jazzy instrumental, each man taking a solo. Their distinct sound was immediate, especially Ralph Dillon's sharp guitar lines and Leon Dubinsky's chunky piano chording, yet it was completely spontaneous, not at all crafted or manipulated for some pretentious end. The number showed how well Buddy and the Boys have incorporated their country and jazz influences and how well the whole band flows together.

It is remarkable how original Dillon's guitar sound is, how he pushed it to the limit. He is without question one of the best rock guitarists around.

They then moved on to their rockier material which included "Turn This Train Around", "Buddy Better Get On Down The Line", and "Don't Fool Yourself". It was so refreshing to hear the power and raw emotion of these songs about living, loving and hating in Cape Breton. They come right to the point with a desire to inform, to speak out, to attack, and to sympathize. Yet, they are never sentimental or overfull with biased local pride like so many of these regional folk singers. They are harsh and sincere and very caring as well. Their best songs are in the true spirit of great rock and roll song writers from Bob Dylan to Johnny Rotten. The only thing that I didn't like was vocalist Max MacDonald's treatment of most of them. His light, satiric nature becomes tiring and he seems to simply lack the seriousness to give these songs their full meaning.

However, when Leon Dubinsky

sang, the songs took on an added and wonderful strength. It is Dubinsky who wrote these songs and it is he who has experienced and lived these songs. They are his sentiments, his realizations, and his discoveries. When he did "Long Gone", a new number, his rough voice overflowed with naked intensity. I had hoped he would have done "Nellie", possibly his best song (it is on the second live album) or "Livin' Alone Ain't Easy" but I was satisfied. When he did play guitar, his simple Chuck Berry solos were a joy.

It is unfortunate that his band has been given so little attention. I would like to think favorably of Buddy and the Boys' future but I have my doubts. Whatever happens, I'll savor their two albums forever.



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