

# Theatresports K.O.'s the audience

## Theatresports Theatre Network

review by Mike Spindloe

"I solemnly swear to buy gas at Esso for the rest of my life, and to drink Molson Canadian at every opportunity."

With these words and the singing of our national anthem, Theatresports was underway for another season of wacky and zany antics, otherwise known as improvisational comedy, bringing the spirit of the Fringe indoors to warm our chilled hearts and bones right through the winter.

The action was fast and furious and the casualties high, but the two competing teams, "Fist Full O'Jello" and "Esso OK", paid no heed as they vied for the greatest share of audience applause and a win in the opening thirty minute challenge match. Esso OK jumped out to a big early lead, but a strong comeback by the Jello's came close to forcing a draw when time ran out.

After a brief intermission, the heavyweights took the stage: "All Natural Fibres" and "No Smoking Within 30 Feet of the Pump" squared off for the main event of the evening, a forty minute challenge for possession match. After a seesaw battle which saw both teams take the lead, No Smoking prevailed by a slim 48-47 margin, pulling out victory in the dying seconds of the match.

Magnanimous in defeat, Fibres shook hands with their former foes and retired to the Theatre Network lobby for beer and chili and a game post-mortem, having successfully fulfilled their goal "to explore the inner reaches of the spontaneous mind." Improv night in Edmonton had come to a close.

Though the contests were fierce, the play remained clean: the jokes stayed above waist, the verbal and comedic cliches were refreshingly few and far between and the camaraderie between the teams, even on stage, exemplified the true sporting spirit. There seemed to be an unwritten, or at least unmentioned, rule prohibiting profanity and bad sex jokes — and the show was all the better for it.

In fact, the relaxed, friendly atmosphere extended right into the audience who, rather than heckling the players, were often observed clapping loudly and rolling in the aisles with laughter. We were given lots of opportunity to participate, from supplying the players with topics for their skits to judging the thirty minute challenge match in the first half, but it was the pure comedy coming off the stage which made the evening a memorable one.

Even the sound effects were timely and hilarious, and the taped music at intermission was further indicative of Theatresports' good taste in all matters. We're talking Clash, Talking Heads, and the Velvet Underground's "Rock and Roll," one of the coolest songs ever recorded, here folks. (That's what you get for sending a music critic to the theatre...)

What was most funny, perhaps, was the completely irreverent spirit of the whole proceedings, including the constant (and effective) lampooning of the two corporate sponsors. Even the program, laid out in a fit of corporate zeal, poked fun at the sponsors.

There must have been about twenty different skits presented over the course of the two main games, preceded by a few minutes of free improvisation as a warm-up, all loosely based on ideas garnered from the audience, but the quality of the skits remained consistently high, with only one round called for boring by the appointed judges (fellow Theatresportsers) in the forty minute match. Ironically, both teams failed to impress in this one round, although they

were each "called" by only one of the three judges, the others awarding scores of up to two for the same skit. In fact, compared to the audience response, the judges were ultra-conservative in their scoring, awarding twos and threes on their scale of zero (boring) to five (supercallafragilist...).

The subjects of the skits covered a wide spectrum, from alternating emotions, ie. anger and exuberance, to what would happen if Buck Olsen is elected mayor of Edmonton, to an hilarious play by play of fictitious sports. In each three to four minute segment, the players managed to create as much real comedy as you'll see in a year at the movies.

Theatresports is good, clean fun for child-

ren of all ages, quite literally, and well worth checking out if you can tear yourself away from your books some Sunday night. The games run each Sunday night at Theatre Network, 11845-77 Street, through December 14 and resume in February. Admission is a very reasonable \$4.00, and you can even purchase a seasons pass for a mere \$20. And if their comedy was only hitting on a 2-3 out of five scale last Sunday night, you could die laughing on a night of fives.

If Theatresports' official opening night was any indication of things to come, judging by the obvious enjoyment of the festivities by the very near-full house as well as the players, the 1986-87 season should be a highly successful one. Long live Esso!

## No love lost on Gene & Jezebel

Gene Loves Jezebel  
Sub Theatre  
Monday Oct. 6

review by Dragos Ruiu

Gene loves beer, and Jezebel almost did Okay.

The "Gene Loves Jezebel" concert was amazing. Not amazingly good, but amazing that it was watchable despite all the things that detracted from the performance. It was an interesting performance — visually intriguing. The Astons' brightly coloured costumes and prancing kept your eyes busy. The sound was clear, despite the exorbitant volumes. The sound man had to be deaf (if not at the start of the show, by the end).

It was okay, even though Mike Aston crawled off the stage on his knees after losing his balance attempting the difficult task of standing on two feet and... (drum roll, please) holding a microphone. He seemed very drunk.

It was okay because, in fact, his capers seemed to add to the show. It gave you something to cheer for. You wanted him to keep standing as he flailed his arms trying to keep his balance on the monitor speaker. You empathized with him when he struggled to get the mike stand to... stand up. There was a gut feeling there when he runs back to his mike — almost in time to sing the next lyric. Almost the same feeling as when Rocky fights the Champ. Can he overcome the incredible odds?

It was okay because he looked better when he returned after his crawling exit; two songs later and walking on the soles of his feet this time. The intriguing music of GLJ did not seem to suffer much from his excursion because the two twins vocals intertwine often, and Jay Aston continued singing as if it was all planned. When the two did manage to get together it was superlative. They managed to sing "Heartache" with good harmony, even though every once in a while one of them would screw up the lyrics.

It was okay because their dancing about



Gene Loves Jezebel: Mike and Aston harmonize in Sub Theatre

photo Rob Schmidt

your presence again! This concert was mediocre and that is the biggest disappointment of all. Just think of what a brilliant performance they could have put on with a little more effort (and perhaps less booze). There is a lot of talent there and why waste it? Why not impress the people who buy the records? Their fans have a right to feel angry, and ripped off.

Maybe Molsons (the tour sponsor) should be a little less generous with the band's promotional beer next performance. The crowd at this concert was much as expected. The high school Goth types could easily be identified by a variety of blazing hair colours and clothes that looked impeccably punk. Too punk to be punk.

Some of the people at this concert seemed to be in ecstasy by just being there. GLJ is obsessive music, and draws some pretty obsessive fans. One girl spent the entire concert next to the speaker at the corner of the stage, in seeming awe of the band. Most likely though, the sound volume temporarily paralyzed her.

After the concert, some people looked like they enjoyed it. Most looked disappointed.

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October 9, 5:00 p.m.  
Heritage Lounge, Athabasca Hall

We are seeking new graduate and undergraduate members, and we will be organizing co-ordinating councils. We will also be selecting representatives to the Vice-Presidents Advisory Committee on Women's Studies.

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