

# An ace up the sleeve

Concert review by Bruce Cookson

What a surprise! Marie-Lynn Hammond is back with Bob Bossin, and even if they don't appear the best of friends on stage, at least they've revived the old Stringband magic.

And it was the magic that kept a full house audience clapping, laughing and listening attentively in the Centennial Library Theatre last Friday evening as Stringband played through their repertoire of Scots/Gaelic, Irish, Indian, French-Canadian and

original songs.

Bob Bossin has put together a new Stringband line-up. Gone are Nancy Ahern and Terry King. Old Stoneface has taken his fiddle to New York where he's eeking out a living as a jazz musician.

The new line-up which has just been together for about a month sounds like it might be the best however. Dennis Nichols has been added on electric bass and he provides good, solid backup, bobbing away behind an instrument bigger than himself. Zeke Mazurek, from the Sneezy Waters show, is

the new fiddle player and he may be the person needed to divert some of the attention from Bossin and Hammond. He's quite a change from King. At one point in the concert, while the others were tuning, Mazurek leaped into the audience and proceeded to serenade with great, melodramatic sweeps of the bow.

Mazurek sounds all right too, equally adept at Irish and East European folk songs. At times he sounded a bit like Wasyl Kohut. Indeed, on some of their longer, jazzier numbers, Stringband echoed CANO.

But, Stringband is Bob Bossin and, once again, Marie-Lynn Hammond. Bossin is the jester presiding over the court, Hammond is the haughty artiste standing aloof but not unnoticed. Both are excellent song-writers and both were in good form, even if they did seem to be ignoring each other.

As usual, Bossin played banjo, guitar and concertina. He's not an outstanding instrumentalist, but he is a good musician. He knows what works and what doesn't, and he knows his limits. He's also very good at between song patter, telling stories and jokes. Joe Clark and Alberta oil were favorite targets Friday, but so was the other 'paper.' "We've always enjoyed playing Edmonton, *Journal* reviews notwithstanding."

Bossin's voice seems to have improved, a mean feat for one that has about as much character as a marshmallow. He sounds best on his satirical, social comment songs, such as "Talking Atom Blues." The latter was a clever dig at the nuclear energy industry: *now it cures unemployment/one way or another*

It's just fantastic to hear Hammond again. Her voice is clear and strong and charged so deeply with emotional resonance that she goes way beyond merely singing words. She creates a world and the best example of this were songs like "Flying - Summer of 44" and "Mrs. Murphy."

She has distanced herself somewhat from some of her more personal songs. "I Don't Sleep With Strangers Anymore" ("not meant to be construed as band policy") was punctuated with cynical asides.

Stringband played well together, getting better as the night wore on. Their four voice harmonies were especially enjoyable. This current Stringband tour may point to a rejuvenation of the group as long as Bossin and Hammond can conquer their egos and once again make music together. They really need each other, and their fans need them.

For those who were turned away, Stringband will probably be returning in the spring.

## The blond bombshell

Theater review by Marni Stanley

There is a great deal of energy burnt in the Citadel's current mainstage production of *Hey Marilyn* but it doesn't produce much of a glow.

After hearing reports of enthusiastic ovations and reading accolades and tales of great hopes for Broadway I was more than slightly disappointed by the production, correct that — by the overproduction. There are hundreds of lights and tens of people, a live dog, dry ice, rear-screen projections, mirrors, a movie sound stage and various other devices to divert the audience's attention away from a bad script.

*Hey Marilyn* is an opera in the sense that there are no speaking roles, but there are no memorable songs either. And there are lines like "Arthur, I'm sorry I lost the baby" that just are not meant to be sung. The music itself is a kind of disco-rock with a most irritating tambourine occasionally accompanying the piano, drums, and trumpet.

This production is billed as a "musical biography" and it attempts to give us all the reasons behind the rise and fall of one Norma Jean Baker. But the Norma Jean that the Citadel offers us is singularly unsympathetic. Lenore Zann may offer a good reproduction of the Monroe voice and looks; but she simply does not have the charisma to make us believe she could ever inspire the myth status that the real Marilyn achieved. Instead we simply wonder that Marilyn lasted so long.

In this production we are told that Monroe was dumped on all her life. Deserted by her father, maltreated by an insane mother and married off too young she went on to become a sex symbol revered and abused by managers, her public and men. Her famous husbands, Joe DiMaggio and Arthur Miller are

portrayed as slightly stupid, inadequate men in a number of rather irritating scenes. Even if I put aside the miniature baseball diamond with its shadow game representing DiMaggio in action, I still find it difficult to forgive the little Jewish dance that Miller and Monroe perform through a whirlwind cultural tour of New York. It is a trip that includes some hideous sculpture, the public library, and a mercifully brief moment of bad opera. Miller is condemned throughout as having unfairly filled her head with "intellectual dreams."

We are also treated to a view of Monroe at Strassberg's Actors Studio and we are lead to believe that the great fantasy in her life is to play Anna Christie. There is a requisite madhouse scene which can be identified by the chanted nursery rhymes that appear to be the contemporary stage shorthand for inmates of the puzzle factory. Of course there is a great deal of hysterical drinking and pill popping as well.

Cliches and silliness aside, the final scene is strongly presented and might even move us if its effect were not weakened by the fact that the sound stage set had been used too many times before. What emotion we do feel is largely due to Rudy Webb's masterful performance as the observant narrator. Special mention also to Sam Moses for bringing the production its only honest humor.

There are a large number of flaws in *Hey Marilyn* and underneath it all there are some good moments too, but the latter are not frequent enough to compensate for the former. If Broadway wants this production let them have it — but please don't ever revive it here. *Dracula* isn't the only thing in town that sucks.

## On the dark side of the wall

Record review by Bob Fedun

It looks like Roger Waters of Pink Floyd has a hit on his hands. Together with his back-up band he has put together *The Wall*, a double-album package that restores one's faith in "concept" albums.

Once again Waters is responsible for the majority of the compositions, which unfortunately means the lyrics are rarely better than Barry Manilow cliches. When he does get free of the idea that every second line has to rhyme, the words are much cleverer than one might expect. Combined with the background noises/voices, the vocals are probably as revealing as Waters could possibly want.

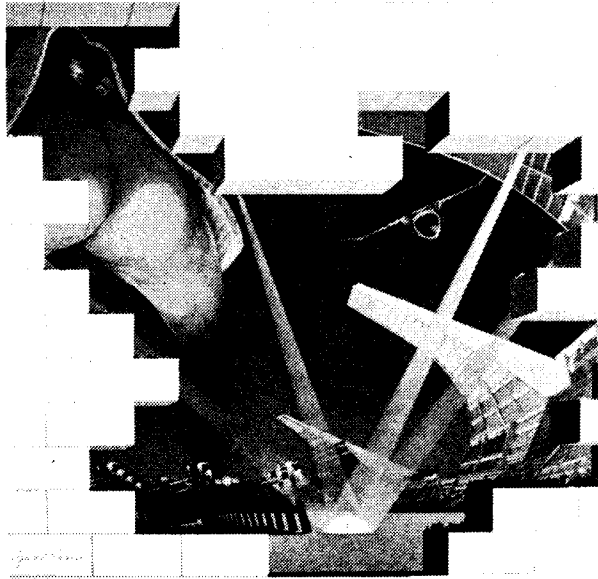
have gotten the creativity out of their systems on their solo releases. Having realized the limits of their musical abilities, they no longer try to outdo the latest "spacey" efforts, which comes as a relief to Floyd fans.

The more straight-forward rock numbers are saturated with slam-bang, shoot-em-up lyrics which flip-flop in terms of tense. Very clever Roger! The retrospective attitude is one that can be shared with long-time devotees from way back when, while the actual glances into the past themselves (following in the punk "tradition"), are catchy enough to appeal to those mindless fourteen year olds who seem to run the local FM rock stations.

Production by Gilmour, Waters and Bob Ezrin has resulted in a few small steps forward for Pink

Floyd. Some very tasty background vocals appear (including a chorus of schoolchildren singing "we don't need no education"). The grande finale takes some getting used to, in that the attempt is made to resurrect the central theme of the album on electric guitar, overlaying orchestra and operatic vocalizations. Sort of like ending with the overture. For a first effort, the effect is better than adequate.

Any attempt to compare this band with the one that released that MOR hit "Dark Side Of The Moon," is ludicrous. That would be like going to see *Rust Never Sleeps* and expecting Neil Young to sing "Heart of Gold" exactly like he did before. Don't look for another "Dark Side" and you won't be disappointed.



Many of the songs appear to be designed for live performances (especially "In The Flesh"/Hey You/The Show Must Go On"). The orchestration of *The Wall* prohibits live recording, however. The entire work bounces back and forth between heavy metal (remember heavy metal?), and light, airy, acoustic guitar tunes. On the latter, Pink Floyd illustrates its maturity, in that there are no more attempts to dazzle the listener with electronic effects. Guitarist David Gilmour and keyboardist Richard Wright appear to

## Book celebrates Alta.

Book review by Kitchener Prijitt

Everyone loves to celebrate anniversaries and Hurtig Publishers is no exception. In honor of Alberta's 75th anniversary as a province, the Edmonton publishing firm has assembled the *Alberta Diamond Jubilee Anthology*, a collection of Alberta prose and poetry sponsored by Alberta Culture and edited by John W. Chalmers.

In the book's introduction, Chalmers writes that the aim of the anthology was to "exemplify the richness and vitality of Alberta's literary culture," and to portray the past and present "quality of Alberta life." The result is an anthology that strains to attain these goals. There is enough good material in the book to cover its flaws, but nonetheless there remains the feeling that not enough chaff was sifted out or that somewhere its concept became muddled.

Not surprisingly, it is writers like Rudy Wiebe, W.O. Mitchell, Earle Birney, Aritha van Herk, Henry Kreisel, Howard O'Hagan and Robert Kroetsch who keep the anthology afloat. It is worth having for their words alone although their contributions, like all the others in the book, have been previously published. But it is a good sign to see the talent shown by other less known or established Alberta writers. Steve Hume,

Jean B. Grieg, Fred Stenson, Sid Marty, W.P. Kinsella, and Bert Almon are a few who come to mind, although the number of contributors (over a hundred) make it unfair to single out only the above.

However, there is also a lot of filler material. Perhaps this is an attempt to prove Chalmer's claim that Alberta is one of the "most dynamic regions for the literary arts in North America." The poetry seems to be most afflicted with this problem. To compete against prose, poetry must be so much better, not because it is inferior to begin with, but because it demands more effort and patience from the reader.

Unfortunately, a weak and uninteresting poem draws more attention to itself than a similarly flawed story, and such is the case with the *Diamond Jubilee Anthology*.

The prose is both fiction and non-fiction and consists of short stories, historical and humorous accounts, reminiscences and essays. They are diverse and remarkably free of the cheap sentimentalizing that usually accompanies anniversaries. However, one more cute animal story would have been too much.

The biggest problem with the book (only a problem is you think a book should live up to its

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