

photo Russ Sampson



photo Peter Nagalins

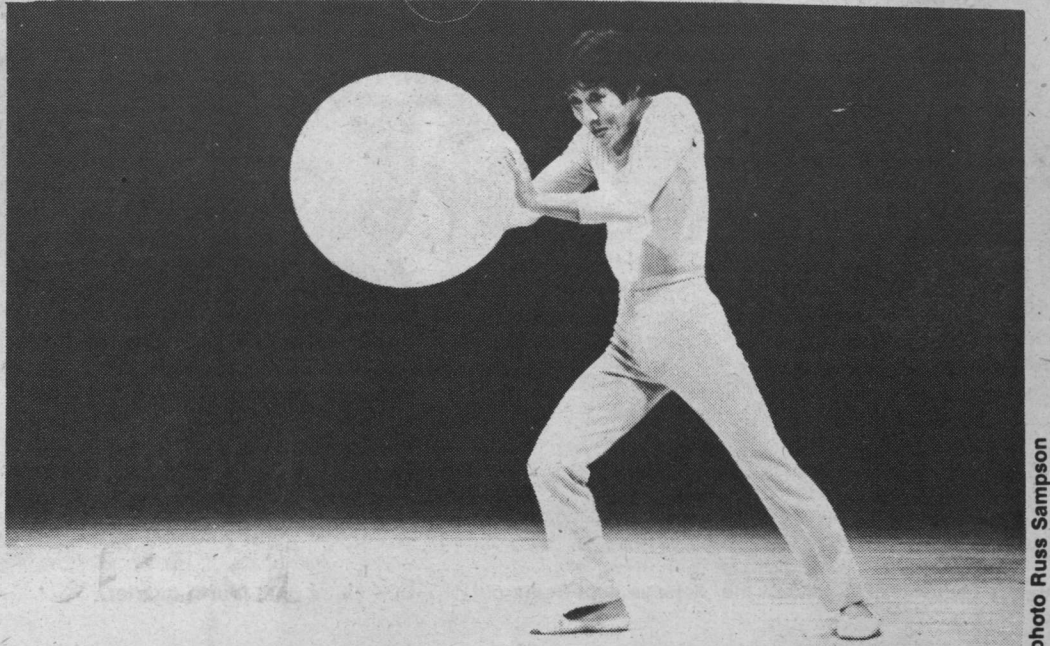


photo Russ Sampson

Yass Hakoshima performing his magical mime before audiences in SUB Theatre last Sunday.

# Hobo's aims for back alley — misses

Review by Jeff Moore

After inspecting my jeans and Bruce's Big Iron Drilling pants, the manager of Hobo's reluctantly led us by a dark circuitous route to an inconspicuous corner table off the kitchen. Before I sat down I asked him about the changes in the Grand Hotel's lower depth since Railtown. He assured me that he had had nothing to do with Railtown or the South Seas. I casually countered with, "Well, so what's Hobo's all about, then?" With a sweeping gesture and a smile that glittered like a slot machine jackpot he answered, "Exactly what you see, Las Vegas North." But let me begin at the beginning.

It all started with an invitation to review the Dale Gonyea Show at Hobo's Comedy Supper Club. This coincided with Stan Rogers' last night at The Hotbox, the last night of The Hotbox itself, for that matter. Still, I was never one to turn down a free meal, so Bruce and I decided to attend both.

First, let's take care of Dale Gonyea and Hobo's. The importing of entertainers like Gonyea is a manifestation of Edmonton's insane desire to shine with nine hundred watt intensity on the big lightbulb

entertainment map of North America. To achieve this the city is certain that it must mirror exactly what is produced south of the forty-ninth parallel. If that necessitates importing American talent, so be it, after all we've got the money now. That said, let me return to Saturday night.

Bruce and I sat down and after enduring the club's own musical junkfood decided that the singer did have a good voice for it, sweet enough to give you diabetes. We also ate two cold, bland meals. The menu is basically Fuller's fare masquerading as something else. Just what exactly, I'm not sure; but I am sure that at \$17.50 a person the prices are a rip-off worthy of any Vegas casino.

Dale Gonyea's performance was at times witty but very predictable. He set the tone immediately by laying down a motel paper toilet seat cover on the piano bench and then pressing a plunger candelabra to the top of the piano. You're right, toilet bowl humour. Gonyea relies largely on ribald puns and double entendres for his big laughs so his songs and jokes are replete with them; for example, "I wrote a song about your 106th street. It's called 'Pimp and Circumstance.'"

He also did the obligatory nightclub, nonsexual song. It was entitled, "Marylou is a Man." And of course there was the old standby, the partial strip, to turn on the ladies.

"The Red Gloves," an opera parody, was the best number in his act. It was here that Gonyea demonstrated some skill at the keyboard and an ability to parrot operatic vocals and theatrics.

Still, for the most part, Bruce and I remained slack jawed. Finally, there was the Edmonton audience who, as usual, delighted in being patronized by Gonyea. When the comedian showed off his stage clothes and said, "This is the layered look that they're wearing in L.A., it'll be here in two years," the audience giggled at their so-called lack of sophistication.

Bruce and I left as soon as Gonyea's hour was finished thanking the manager at the door. The highlight of our evening at Hobo's came when he asked us if we were ready for the bill. We gently reminded him that he had invited us down for a free dinner if we reviewed the show and after some discussion he managed to recall it all. Las Vegas, Edmonton style. No self respecting hobo would be caught dead in this place.

Between shows we fueled up at the Gateway party and then arrived at The Hotbox at 1 a.m. for Stan Rogers' last set. Since Stan's recent performance at the Orange Hall has already been reviewed in a previous Gateway I will be brief. Rogers is a Canadian folkie who breathed a sincerity into his songs that was refreshing after the glib lyrics of the "Barry Manilow" fluff we were exposed to only hours before. Rogers' lyrics are perceptive observations about real human dilemmas. "First Christmas," a song requested from the audience, exemplifies this fact; it considers the unsettled and ambiguous feelings one feels on his or her first Christmas away from family and friends. Back at Hobo's the club singer (sorry but I've forgotten his name) moans insipid lines like: "And I don't know what to say, cause you take my my breath away." Comparing the two acts is not unlike comparing a marathon runner to an overweight executive jogging around the Royal Glenora.

The evening ended on a sad note as I reflected on the fact that in this city it is becoming increasingly difficult to see quality Canadian folk music. The fire has now gone out of The Hotbox (the new owners plan to change the restaurant's name and do not plan to promote live music), but it continues to burn at The South Side Folk Club. Nevertheless, most Edmontonians it would seem, are content with the discarded ashes of Vegas's entertainment blast furnaces. It's going to be a cold winter for many of them I'm afraid.

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8 P.M.-MIDNIGHT

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