

ENTERTAINMENT

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Actual Art/Virtual Viewing TNB starts new season

Theatre New Brunswick unveils the world premiere of Norm Foster's new play, *Office Hours*

PETER J. CULLEN

THE BRUNSWICKIAN

Norm Foster knows how to write comedy, and David Nairn knows how to perform it. The combination of the two yielded a delightfully entertaining sneak preview of Theatre New Brunswick's season opening play, *Office Hours* on Wednesday evening. The witty one-liners, interspersed with energetic acting and some interesting character associations, lifted the play from what might otherwise have been a disappointing finish.

The main focus, no doubt, was Foster's script. A twisting, intertwining series of story lines set the foundation for *Office Hours* -- six stories occur throughout several city offices within a one day time frame. Each vignette contained jokes that humorously foreshadowed the coming scenarios: hints of the steamy sex novel author, suicide attempts and the dead race horse appeared and reappeared in dialogue, hinting at comic situations that were bound to arise anywhere at any moment. Foster is excessive -- and successful -- with his characters' witty remarks on homosexuality, obesity and adultery. However, the relatively weighty topics were tempered with an appropriate amount of jesting and jokes. The small world he created for his characters establish a feeling of bizarreness and overwhelming irony as their discussions and offhand comments eventually sew together all the loose ends by the final scene.

The sixteen characters were played by only five actors, most notably TNB veterans David Hughes, from last season's *The Gin*

Game, and the animated David Nairn, who excelled in *Lend Me A Tenor*. Nairn took centre stage in almost all four of his pieces, adeptly guiding the entire second act away from the path of pointlessness and triviality that it begins to veer towards due to a lack of acting energy. Playing the focal actor for each of the second half's scenarios, Nairn's comedic presence was the glue that solidified the show. He not only changed clothes with each character but also adopted the new personalities just as skillfully, gaining momentum and providing energy but also drawing back enough to let the others wield their punchlines. In "The Visit," Nairn portrays a lawyer who reveals his homosexuality to his overbearing and domineering mother, Rhonda, and obedient father, Lloyd. Nairn, in a deadpan fashion, adroitly plays the resigned role to his "overbearing and domineering" mother who constantly thrusts orangeade and Polish coil into his face. In "The Analyst" he puts car salesmen and game show hosts to shame, re-instilling a spirit of vigour into the play with his feverish, over-the-top sales pitch to an unsuspecting psychiatrist, played by Elizabeth Goodyear.

Goodyear was effective in the first act as a television producer and a disgruntled wife, but she performed at her best as the analyst in the final scenario. Her attention continuously diverted to the play's re-occurring steamy sex novel and her romantic weekend that was being thwarted by disagreeable patients and the return of Rhonda and Lloyd, amusingly driving home the point of her sexually frustrated status.

Hughes drew laughter as the drunken movie maker, Bobby Holland. However, his role as Lloyd Penny, the submissive husband, was terrific. Constantly patronized by his wife Rhonda, Lloyd provided a casual demeanour and laid-back humour to his scenes. However, Rhonda's character, played by Nonnie Griffin, did not fare as well as Lloyd. Despite the title of an overbearing and domineering mother, Griffin could not convey those characteristics to the audience. While the words were there, the actions simply were not.

Frank McNulty worked his way through the overweight, horse-killing jockey, but was at his best as the con-man adulterer. His attempts at smooth-talking his wife failed repeatedly, much to the delight of the audience, and his rationalization of his affairs were absurdly humorous.

Behind the actors, the revolving set loomed large in the background but drew attention away from the show itself. The very drab colours and sparseness of the various office settings provided an unnecessary distraction to the audience, especially during the monotonous moments of the second act in which the crowd's attention was left with nowhere else to wander. However, the rotating set proved effective for quick scene changes, while the music ("Takin' Care of Business," "Love and Marriage") emphasized the drama that unfolded within each scenario.

Fuelled primarily by Nairn's buoyant acting ability and Foster's intricate script, *Office Hours* proves itself a very amusing premiere for TNB's new season.

The play runs from October 10-19 at The Playhouse.



PAT FITZPATRICK PHOTO

"SONG OF THE SELF": Artists Rhonda Watrin and Ellie Klippenstein created this piece, currently on display in the UNB Art Centre, located in Memorial Hall.

JETHRO E. CABILETTE

THE BRUNSWICKIAN

This month the UNB Art Centre presents *Actual Art/Virtual Viewing*, an exhibition held in conjunction with the 1996 Canadian Society for Education through Art Conference.

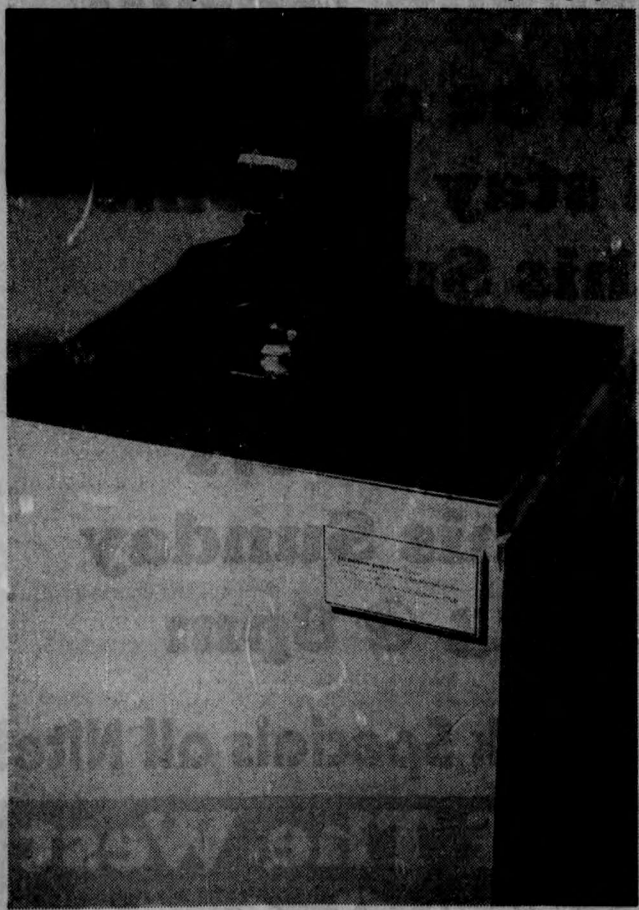
Art has progressed throughout the years through various expressive styles, media and creative techniques. Perhaps of greater importance is the process through which art is seen by the viewer: whether through exhibitions, photographs or television. Certainly the latest technological advances have made it possible to transmit sight, sound, touch, taste and so on through vast distances with various innovative results.

The various pieces at the Art Centre, located in UNB's Memorial Hall, convey a richness in texture, colour, imagery and visual impact. The West Gallery contains artworks from the UNB Permanent Collection. These various pieces have also been digitized or copied on transparencies; as an alternative presentation of the same image. Therein lies a question of the visual differences between actual versus "virtual" viewing of the artworks in this exhibition. Is there a difference? In this writer's opinion, the answer would be yes, but within the context of detail rather than pure variance

between the two viewings. The images that are presented through the various overhead projectors, computers and even a Holmes Stereoscope, are restructured in size. They do not necessarily convey the actual image presented, and often the texture of the artwork is not clear. Yet it does provide a glimpse of the variety in artistic styles and presentation. The pieces from the UNB Permanent Collection itself exemplify the richness and diversity of art. The opposing styles lend themselves to a thorough example of artwork through the ages, as well as supplying varied textural, colourful and design-oriented material. There is the abstract contemplation of George Fry's *Way To Go Guys* and the realism of Leo LeBlanc's self-portrait. Andrea Blann's cheery and colourful *The Second Eye* is contrasted by Brigid Toole Grant's darkly evocative *Into the Blue?*. While Philip Iverson's kaleidoscopic *Portrait* is tempered with Jim Lawrence's photo-art melange *Bob Dylan: Rock Icon*.

The East Gallery presents two bodies of works that inspire or question art and real life. *Photography as Inquiry*, and *Its Relationship to Art Education Practices* are photographic pieces from three talented artists: Cathy Mullen, Julie Greto and Miriam Davidson. These photographic

works present each piece as a process of inquiry. They delve into issues and values central to each artist's work. Miriam Davidson's work is indicative of her commitment to documentation of cultural performance in Canada. Her pieces of the Oro Fair bring about an understanding of the nature of society and its love of celebration and cultural expression. For Julie Greto, photography is reflective of a "...meditative/self-reflective inquiry." The pieces of her photographic expression follow a contemplative journey through memory, internal exploration and potential within all people. *Song of the Self Passion: The Lived Experience of Art Educators* are artworks that display "...the phenomenon of 'passion' and its effects upon artists and art educators. Passion, according to a presentation by Rhonda Watrin, is defined as "...an intense desire and overpowering emotion toward some special object..." (Watrin: abstract, 1996). The pieces by Rhonda Watrin and Ellie Klippenstein transmute the emotional expression of passion into a visual presentation of colour, design and contours. The capturing of this emotive phenomenon through two and three-dimensional visual displays helps convey the inspirational, intriguing and captivating experience of passion.



PAT FITZPATRICK PHOTO

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Pounding the Winebible

ANTHONY S. DAVIS

THE BRUNSWICKIAN

Alcoholic Christians? Nope, just Winebible. This Toronto trio (plus the enlistment of a bassist for touring) is not a bunch of long-haired gorillas left over from the ice age (or from the 1980s metal scene). Winebible are an intricate rock group that combines the explosiveness of a metal band with the intricacies of traditional middle eastern music, and they are performing at The Dock this weekend.

Now this comparison may sound a lot like The Tea Party to you, but they are not. Winebible's particular music is more towards a metal band, only they stress the actual singing and their acoustic instruments. These two qualities are what make the band so noticeable. There is not an element of falseness, and that is great to hear.

When asked what influenced the band's style, the answer was not what one would expect from the typical '90s metal band. No dark stories about listening to Black Sabbath by candlelight as young children or an inner angst about something that happened in a story. Nope. This band is influenced by well written songs.

That influence shows, as the songs on this album have all been well thought through. The timing is perfect, and not just in the mechanical sense. This band knows that the song sounds right at a certain speed, and so that is the

speed at which it is played.

The self-titled album is being distributed by Quality Records, which, although it sounds like a strange move (a metal/rock band on a dance label?), it makes sense in the words of singer Brian Hughes. "We convinced them to pick us up. ... They said 'we can't really promote you guys,' [but] they know how to promote the 'Macarena'. ... But it is nationally distributed ... and we were going to [promote] ourselves anyway."

Although this is the band's first time coming to Fredericton, they are definitely not unfamiliar with the east coast and its music scene. In fact, two band members, Hughes and guitarist Jeff Jodrey, hail from Nova Scotia.

The band was formed around 1992 in Toronto, and has been going strong since. Hughes had moved to Toronto to try and find work, and a few years later Jodrey followed suit. They had known each other before and, as always happens, Toronto gobbled up these two musicians and spat out a worthy Canadian rock band.

Despite the move to Toronto, Winebible still plays their music for the east coast. The band feels much more welcome in a circle where people are not just fans of the latest video, but fans of the band or the album.

At first thought, this album may come across as a typical Canadian album with that Tea Party thing happening, plus several comparisons to The Headstones. But it is not just a rehash of old material by other bands; it is new material by a band trying to start something new themselves.

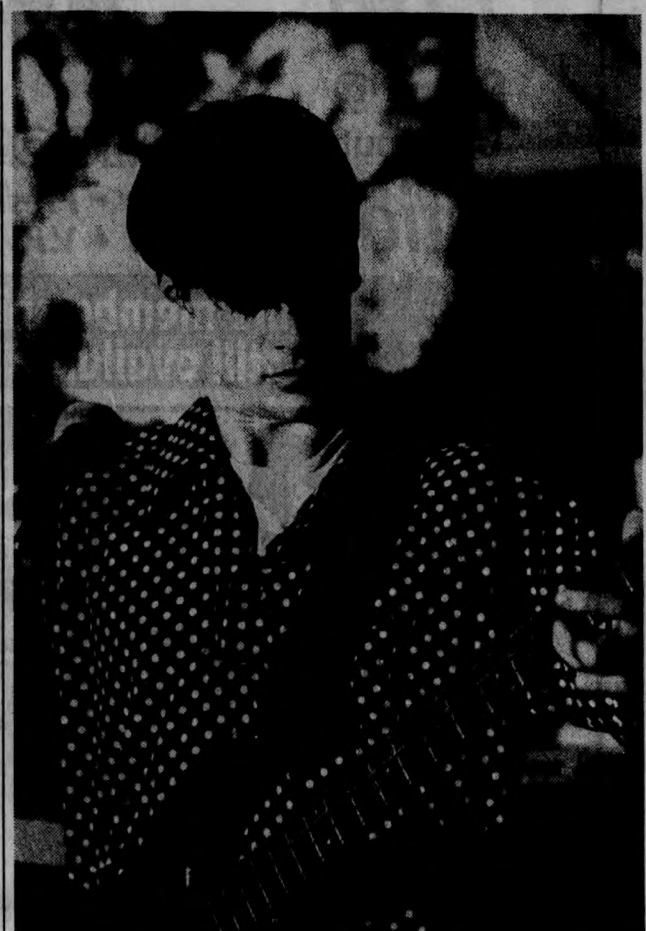
People From Earth Growing Up from the Ground independent

This album is so good it makes you want to cry. All the songs have these amazing little catches, and boy do they hook you. Songs like "Was He Cutting Up a Body" and "Aquaman" are both faster songs, and they have such an original sound that the only way other musicians could get that same sound would be by having Primus jam with

Phish. Slower songs like "A Baby" and "Killing Self" are so perfectly played that it brings tears to the eyes.

The other very noticeable track on this album is "Join The Dark Side," which makes this album a must for any Star Wars fan. If you are a big fan of music that you can groove to, this album is for you. If you enjoy Canadian music a la Rheostatics, then get this album because it is in the same family of music.

-- Anthony Davis



SCOTT MCFADDEN PHOTO

JAZZ-A-LICIOUS: Jazzberry Ram invaded The Cellar last weekend, demonstrating their own brand of jazz and funk. The band grooved through the evening, delighting the assembled crowd. In appreciation of the music, people leapt to their feet and took to dancing, an event rarely seen in The Cellar.

have an entertaining thanksgiving