

# Arts & Entertainment

## Staines alter-ego Lana Lust comes to town to offend

interview by Mike Spindloe

**K**ent Staines hasn't always been a cross-dresser. In fact, the Edmonton native, who now resides in Toronto, became the infamous bitch Lana Lust almost by accident. As he explains it, "I was in two shows in Toronto, called *Drag Queens on Trial* and *Drag Queens in Outer Space*, playing a character who was very much like Lana Lust. The character was so popular that I struck out for myself with it."

Lana Lust, if you haven't heard yet, is Staines' alter-ego and the star of his one man/woman show *Lana Lust: The Bitch Stops Here*, which originally appeared in Edmonton at the 1987 Fringe Festival and has since played several other Canadian cities.

Staines describes his show as "a stand-up comedy theatrical piece, with elements of burlesque. It's very rude, highly irrever-

ent and guaranteed to offend." A large part of the show is improvised, including a highly popular segment in which Lana responds to written questions from the audience that are often quite rude.

This improvised bit might seem difficult, but Staines finds it easy: "Lana takes over; stuff comes out of my mouth and I sometimes don't know where it comes from. She can also crush anyone who harbours any fantasies of heckling and get away with it because she's so outrageous." It is also educational: "Lana is gaining true insights into the psychological geography of Canadians." These insights may or may not be chronicled in Lana's upcoming novel, *Lana Lust: My Cuntry*.

The show basically chronicles Lana's "rags to riches climb to fame and superstardom, culminating in her entering the Miss Canada beauty pageant." It is very similar to the show Staines brought to Edmonton last year, except that it has "grown as a result of Lana's experiences and it's always different because of the large amount of improvisation."

Staines also maintains a "serious" acting career, when Lana allows him the time off. An honours graduate in theatre history at the U of A, Staines completed his theatrical training in London. He has appeared at both the Shaw and Stratford festivals, in fact moonlighting as Lana at a late-night cabaret in Stratford after his Shakespearean work.

Staines' experiences with writing Lana's show has also encouraged him to pursue further playwriting projects. He presently has two plays in the works, including a "one man, multi-media murder mystery."

In Edmonton, Staines is a veteran of the Citadel, Stage West and the Chinook Touring Theatre. He is genuinely pleased to be back in Edmonton, but Lana offers a different opinion: "She's really pissed off because she's playing at some low class beer hall instead of the Citadel mainstage."

*Lana Lust: The Bitch Stops Here* appears at the Phoenix downtown through December 11.

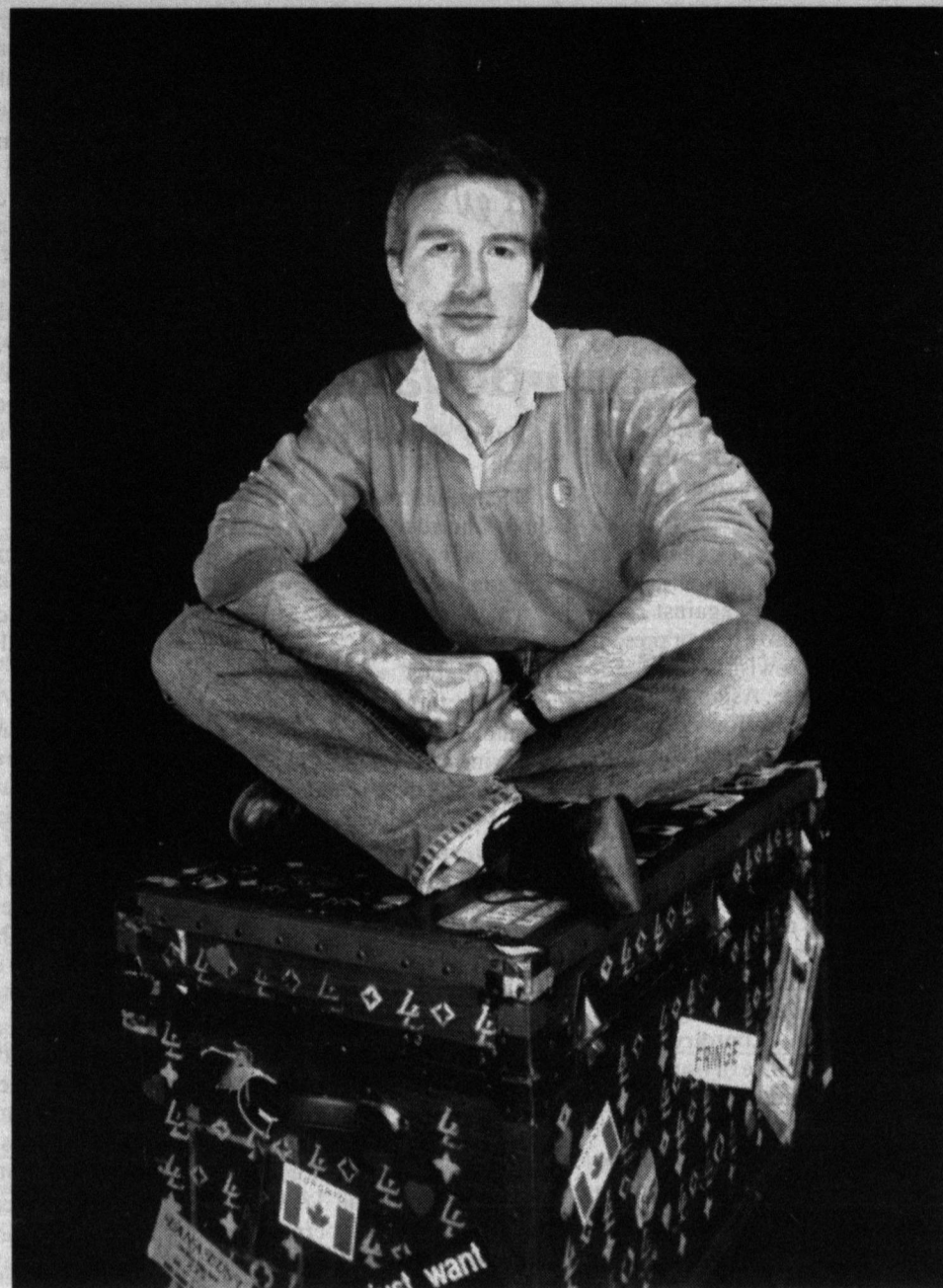
that must be seen to be believed.

Unlike the movie, this version of *Lord of the Rings* contains the entire plot from all three books, and doesn't miss any major points. They even manage to include a couple of the songs with which the books are filled. For the sake of younger children, who made up a large portion of the audience despite the \$16 ticket price, as few names as possible are used and the history of the ring is kept to a minimum. The story is still very complicated despite these cuts, and I'm sure many children, as well as adults who have not read the books, didn't quite catch on. But this didn't seem to detract from anyone's enjoyment. All you really need to do is watch the brilliant work of the puppeteers, and cheer your side on during the well-executed Battle of Minas Tirith.

Several sections of the play are aimed purely at audience enjoyment, and have little to do with the plot. For example, adults and children alike just loved it when a band of orcs left the stage and wandered through the audience. Also memorable were the comedic grovelings of Worm-tongue, a sniveling character whose sole purpose in life seems to be to antagonize Saruman.

The puppets are superb, especially the Ent, Treebeard, Gollum and the wizards, Gandalf and Saruman. Unfortunately, the elf puppets are not up to the standard of the rest, seeming awkward, stilted, and well... puppet-like.

Theatre Sans Fils does an amazing job of bringing *Lord of the Rings* to the stage. Do not be disillusioned by the idea of



Kent Staines in real life, and as the obnoxious bitch Lana Lust, left. He'll be titillating Phoenix theatre audiences for the next week and a half.

Kevin Law



Kevin Law

## Lord of the Rings a faithful recreation

*Lord of the Rings*  
SUB Theatre  
Friday, November 25

review by Grant Winton

**T**o try and stage a novel like *Lord of the Rings*, with all its different races of characters, magical spells, and rather extended length, is something many theatres and film-makers have considered, but few have attempted. The most successful have been Ralph Bakshi's mid-70's animated film, which only covered the first half of the series, and Theatre Sans Fils live stage version, which played SUB Theatre last weekend.

To portray the different races of hobbits, dwarves, and elves, the group uses puppets, ranging in height from one metre for the hobbits, to almost three metres for the elves, to the Nazgul Witch King with an incredible ten metre wingspan. To the puppets are added some amazing special effects, including filling the entire theatre with smoke, Gandalf's laser-firing staff, and a driving soundtrack, played very loud. And I still haven't worked out how they managed the flood which destroyed the black riders. The result is a spectacle

## Marceau entertains, educates

Marcel Marceau  
SUB Theatre  
Monday, November 29

review by Van Le

**S**hould art be created for its own sake or with a purpose or audience in mind? This is one of the basic questions concerning the existence of art and judging from Marcel Marceau's performance on Monday night the answer is the former.

Performing to an audience assaulted with Spielberg excess and Rambo redundancy, Marceau demanded intelligence and concentration. He entertained for two hours with the barest minimum: no props (save for a box or two), and silence with only occasional music in the background.

The world-class mime at times dazzled and bewildered his sold-out audience as he entertained them with pure, undistilled virtuosity. In a previous interview, Marceau gave the impression of being a very strict artist, both with himself and his students. Little did I suspect that he was equally demanding of his audience.

Unfortunately, however, for some members of the audience he proved too demanding. Despite the genius and precision of his performance, some, like myself, were left confused as he mimed such themes as "the creation of the world." Misunderstanding, or non-understanding as it was occasionally, was also a problem with another piece. "The Eater of Hearts" was a piece of "stylized violence" where Marceau is a murderer-clown who must eat the hearts of his victims to stay young. The

watching a puppet show. In this case it was an excellent choice of media. The play will be loved by adults and children alike, and most important, I think even Tolkien himself would have approved.

theatre was filled with expressions of discomfort as the audience slowly understood the story Marceau was miming. Dramatic pieces such as these characterized the first half of the show, as Marceau showed off his new styles of pantomime.

The second half of the show was more familiar: the classic numbers with our hapless hero Bip. It was definitely more relaxing enjoying Bip's misadventures on the train and his sorry attempts at suicide.

Marceau seemed determined, however, to raise mime from a simple comedic art to one capable of expressing all of life. The last piece of the show was the story of "Bip

...for some members of the audience he proved too demanding.

as a soldier." In this piece, Marceau becomes the story of war; miming a tale of heartache, suffering and finally grief and death.

The audience was generally stunned by this performance, though some did recover enough to give Marceau and company a standing ovation. Afterwards, speaking at random with a few people, I found the majority to have high praise. Others, though, were more hesitant in their accolades and yet reluctant to criticize such mastery. The problem seems to be that they were, like myself, unprepared for the difficulty of mime. As a result, they found the experience more educational than enjoyable.