

ENTERTAINMENT

Muller and Co. dazzle a few

Jennifer Muller and the Works
March 10

review by Patrice Struyk

Straying off the beaten path is not the way to attract Edmonton dance-goers, as Jennifer Muller and the Works learned recently. The New York-based troupe didn't fill a lot of seats. At least the few (roughly 200 per night) people in attendance appreciated what they saw - imaginative choreography and powerful technique.

The first work, "Terrain," was the audience's first taste of Muller's innovative approach. Out glided blue sky: dancers in pyjamas and bare feet. (Imagine *revels* and *rond de jambes* and the like done that way. Impressive.)

Golden earth - first creeping, then rolling, then more jagged - came into play, at times elevating, extending to the heavens. Rolling, playful aqua waves leapt and swirled in. Partners moved together, bubbling and bouncing, with a great deal of touching. One sensed the emotional interaction between the dancers.

This emotion, a feeling of "we're in this together," rather than being just multiple entities moving through space was in fact the theme of the second piece, "Souls". In the Muller tradition, it mirrored resolved and unresolved strife in relationships. Featuring three couples in their separate

little spiritual worlds, "Souls" depicted the tensions of imbalance (now he's upset, now she is, he comes back, she leaves... the whole frustrating circle) and commonplace non-talking relationship. The latter so vividly portrayed the problem, with the dancers touching, moving together, supporting each other, yet never looking at their partner.

The extraordinary use of facial expression in this work is a brilliant conception. The dancers communicate as much with their faces as with their bodies. The flirtation sequence, for example, incorporated the quick peek, the hastily-averted eyes, and even the smoothing of hair.

The only props, chairs, were used and moved about to convey emotional distance. Meanwhile, the dancers leapt and arabesqued in street shoes, ties, and pants. "Souls" premiered only recently (January of this year) and should garner Muller new converts.

"Kite" was bright and playful. Fingersnapping, in jumpsuits in primary colours, the Works filled the stage and moved in synchrony like a kaleidoscope, scattering and coming together. That's the first time I've witnessed a choreographed bumping together and mouthing of the words "I'm sorry" on stage. Amusing. The kites pulled each other's strings, sent the others aloft, succumbed to the environ-

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Scene from Jennifer Muller and the Works in SUB last week

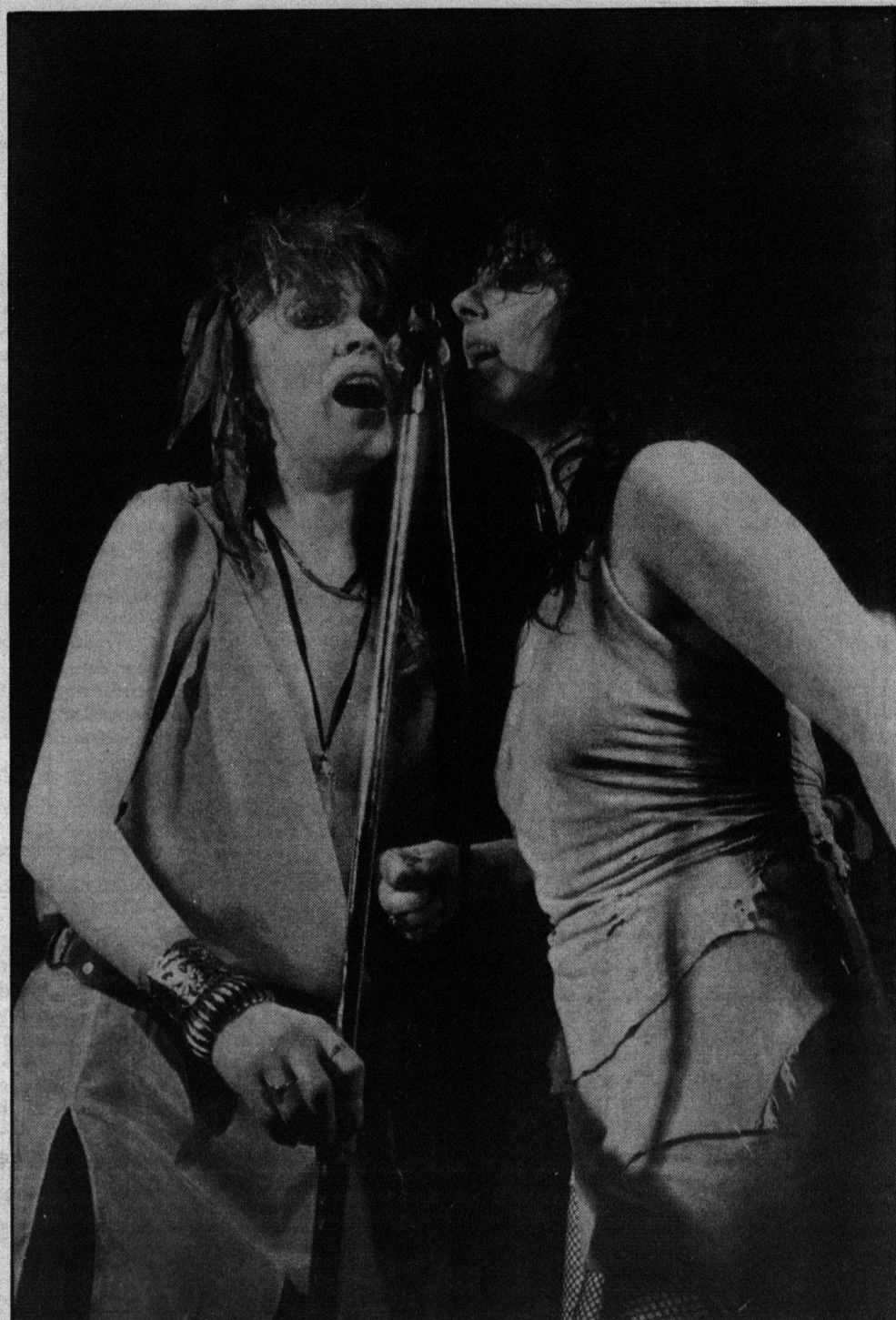


photo: Bill St. John

Lead singer Lucasta (right) and background vocalist Sally Smith (not her real name) of Minutes from Downtown oozed charisma all over a small but festive crowd in Dinwoodie last Saturday.

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