

Fun and frolic on the Fringe cont.

ple there. They were more real than many of the Fringe-Goers that were wandering about to be seen and to be trendy.

About mid-Fringe, I really did feel the strain and the doldrums, (do people still use that word? Do people still understand it?), and then I saw 'Lysistrata'. That revived me. It's a wonderful collection of things. It was rude, crude, obnoxious, sexy and just what I needed. I laughed, I groaned and I enjoyed. If the acting wasn't great, I didn't care. The play was wonderful.

I also saw 'Jacques Strapp's Last Crepe', a one man show with ex-lawyer Hal C. Sisson, at The Park Hotel. A wonderful venue, beer was available while you were enjoying the show. It, too, was rude, crude, and enjoyable. Humour! Comedy! Just what I needed to get me through the rest of the week! Some people that I talked to didn't like it and thought that it was disgusting. Those people really didn't get into it, and those that got into it the night that I saw it laughed uproariously and fully enjoyed themselves. Different strokes for different folks, I guess.

I was still searching for the elusive A and M; Atmosphere and Meaning for those with short memories and who need footnotes. I wandered, roamed, and all those other adjectives; I found myself talking to people in lineups and in the beer tent, trying to find out what they were doing here and why they thought *The Fringe* was so successful.

Some of the answers put to me I had to shake my head mentally and keep on smiling, pretending to be interested and/or amused at what they were saying. I did get some honest answers from some people. This one particular answer was leading me closer to the completion of my quest; 'I don't have the time to see much theatre during the year, and I really like it, and it's cheap ticket prices as opposed to expensive prices at some local theatres, and I enjoy the atmosphere.' Ah ha! Atmosphere! What about it, I ask. Then there follows a bunch of mumbling and humming. No one seems to know about this Atmosphere that I am in search of, as well as many others on the same quest.

This brings me to The Thing That Bugged Me The Most About The People At *The Fringe* section of this epic tale of reporting: Nihilism. This word was banded about so much that I am surprised it didn't get sick or just wither away and die from overuse. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, this word means: The general rejection of customary beliefs in morality, religion, etc. It is a word that has entered into the vocabulary of The Trendy. Apparently, everything at *The Fringe* was 'nihilistic'. 'Oh, he was such a nihilistic actor in a nihilistic play', 'Oh, she danced so nihilistically (!)', 'Isn't it wonderfully nihilistic that this is playing here?', 'The play smacked of nihilism and anarchy, but the actors didn't get that nihilistic feeling just right and so the effect was lost! These are genuine quotes overheard in the beer tent. I've got more, but I think I've conveyed the general situation.

These people wouldn't know nihilism if it came up and bit the end of their noses off. I have nothing against Trendoids in general, but when they try to sound like intelligent human beings, enough is enough.

I also have nothing against people that try to jam and cram in one year of theatre in nine days. If that's what they want to do great, but leave the posing and platitudes at home for those who know how to pose and spout a platitude.

Back to *The Fringe* and the plays. One of the best performances I caught was written and performed by Allan Merovitz at Orange Hall, stage 4. 'If Cows Could Fly' was a marvellous story of a Jewish family in Montreal with its roots in Poland.

Every time Allan Merovitz put on a different hat, he was a different character. This one man show deserved better audiences and better reviews, but unfortunately they just weren't there. If I had had the time I would have seen it twice. A marvellous performance by a marvellous man. I served him at one of the beer tents one day.

Fraser, Carol Mundle, Doug Blackley, Chris Sherback, Philip Paul, and Denise Kenney are actors/actresses to watch out for, just as director Scott Gibson should be watched for. Thank you all, as well as those credited in the program for giving me a deep and moving experience that I will remember for quite a long time, probably forever.

Back to Fringe Central, and I still can't seem to find the A and M that I am so desperately searching for. The beer tent loses its appeal and drawing power.

I am rapidly becoming dead, and nothing but a day off can help, but I can't spare the time. But I have to spare the time since I just can't go on. I just wander about Strathcona. The lineups for the plays are getting ridiculous. People are standing in line for up to three hours in some cases. There just doesn't seem to be a point in lining up for something for three hours and then finding out that you haven't made the cut. All that time wasted, and still no play to see. There has to be a better system, but I can't think of it, and I'm sure that *The Fringe* staff have racked their

were going to do just that.

I hope all you O.P'ed and Roots decorated idiots enjoyed the play and I hope you're proud of yourselves. You're lucky that there was no rope handy and it was light out. May your parents' BMW's catch fire and ruin your brand new topsiders. Bastards!

Anyway. This now brings me to the last day of *The Fringe* and I still hadn't found the A and M of the whole thing. Linda and I spent a very relaxing and boring time during our shift at the beer tents. We then wandered about and hung out and generally kicked back. We were waiting for the closing ceremonies and the volunteer and participant party at midnight.

The parade was great; flaming spears and torches leading a march to the Yardbird Suite, where fireworks were set off, to the delight of the crowd. Some people thought that the fireworks were 'Mickey Mouse', but what did they want? Stuff like at Disneyland? That would take money, and if that money was used for spectacular fireworks, then perhaps the beer tent wouldn't be open and not all of the theatre spaces could be gotten. Give it a break. Edmonton doesn't see that many fireworks and this one was just fine and dandy, thank you very much.

At the Fringe party, I think I finally discovered the object of my quest.

It wasn't the plays, although they contributed to the overall answer, and it wasn't the *Fringe Festival* itself, although that, too, has an important place.

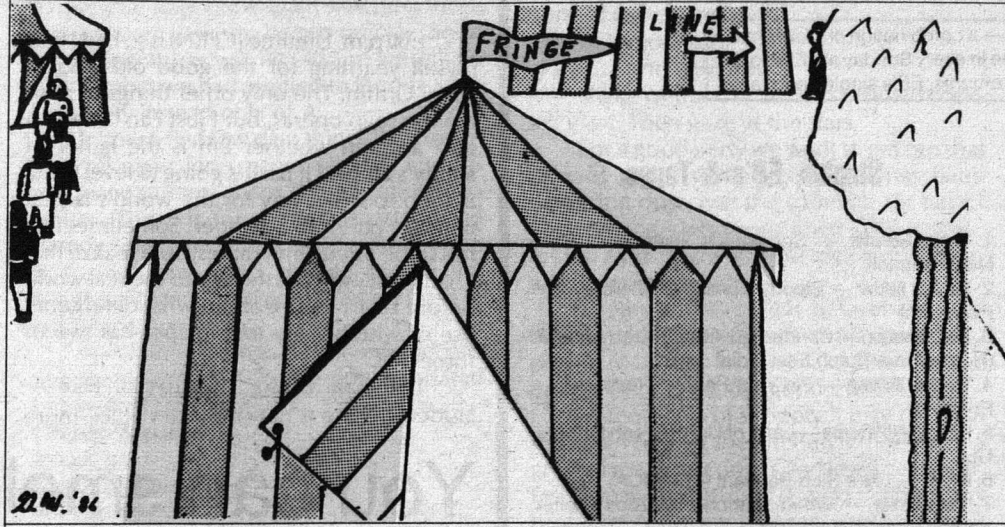
I think that it's the feeling of a festival and all the people milling about and having a good time. It's the kids that invaded Fringe Central for the first few days. It was Sak Theatre from Orlando, Florida that came up here and didn't know what to expect. They loved it and the crowds loved them. They got everyone involved and the audiences always left laughing.

It's Angus, who built his own puppet stand and developed a puppet show of *The Animal Musicians of Bremen* that included a moose. He's about ten or so, and he got involved because he thought that it would be fun. Sorry I never got back to you, Angus. Next year, okay.

It's the volunteers and the staffers who worked their butts off because they, too, wanted to get involved. Especially the staffers. They were great; they seemed to have an answer for everything, whether they knew that answer or not.

It's Brian Paisley, for his dream and dedication. I don't think too many people could do what he does and still laugh and joke, even though he can't believe what's going on around him. 119,000 tickets in nine days? Some kind of 'Fringe Festival'.

All the above contribute to the atmosphere of *The Fringe*. As for the meaning, I still don't have an answer. Supply your own, if you want. I'm going to think about it for a year and try to find the answer next year. The only way that I can think to sum this up, is to say, 'Wow. Wasn't that a festival.'



Another of my Favourites was 'Rhines-tones', written by MFA student Catherine Girczyc. This is a story about a Pork Queen and how she hated her position. Annette Loiselle was great as the Pork Queen, and Ron Pearson as the Zen Painter was great. It was weird and wonderful, a definite hoot and I can hardly wait for the sequel. Hint, hint, Catherine.

One of the best at this year's Fringe, in my opinion and from what I saw, was 'The Cambodians . . . We Live Across A Danger'. This play literally left me speechless and stunned. I cannot come up with enough superlatives or descriptions to do justice to this masterpiece. Not only was I driven to the brink of tears, but this play about Cambodian refugees living in Edmonton and their stories made me laugh on occasion. The simple set, a chair for a while and percussion instruments, was masterful. The acting, as well as the scripting, since this was a U of A drama collective and collaboration in-class exercise, was perfect. I hated the Khmer Rouge characters and cried with the victims. Donna

collective brains for a solution.

A case in point that pissed me off totally. My girlfriend and I wanted to see 'Papa Died Under One Of Those Great Big Heads On Easter Island' after we had seen 'Terra Straniers', which proved to be rather disappointing.

Anyway, we got to stage 5, the Walterdale, at about 7:30, and there was quite a line already for the last performance of 'Papa . . .' at 11:30 that night. We stood in line for an hour and a half until the tickets went on sale at 9:00. There had been three head counts done by very responsible Fringe Staffers, including Brian Paisley, and we seemed to be assured of getting in.

Then, the jackbooted, inconsiderate, trendoid, selfish things ahead of us started letting their friends in line. We, as well as about 80 to 100 people behind us didn't get in to see the play. We had been standing there for 1½ hours, we had been told that we would get in, we did not get in.

I shouted that it was time to storm the Bastille, and some people looked like they

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