

Theatre Romantic Gay murder

interview by Rosa Jackson

Toronto actor Randy Hughson is not short of enthusiasm about the phoenix Theatre's latest production, *Being at Home with Claude*, in which he plays Yves, a male prostitute that is being investigated for having murdered his lover. "It's an incredible, absolutely incredible show", he effuses.

Hughson adds that this play is "not for the faint of heart... it's hard to know how it will be received, the subject matter is so graphic". Although Yves is homosexual, Hughson stresses that the story "could have taken place between a man and a woman... it's about passion, intensity, the highest of love".

The play is also brimming with tension and suspense. "Most plays move from one to a hundred," says Hughson. "This play starts at eighty. The play starts like a play would end."

The opening scene is designed to grab the audience's attention, with Yves in the midst of a grueling questioning session. "It's the investigator and me: it's pretty intense", Hughson comments. "We've been in there for 36 hours, and we're just screaming at the top of our lungs."

The play ends with a 37 minute monologue, which Hughson describes as "constant talking, tears, and incredibly passionate and dramatic stuff". This speech, and the topic which the play deals with, present challenges to Hughson. He has, however, found the means to overcome them. "I draw upon situations, like my girlfriend, some feelings and things I have for her. Basically, I have to act it: the words are so poetic and beautiful, I throw myself into the words and the emotion seem to come."

Hughson believes that the audience, too, will find the play challenging. "It's going to force a lot of people... to look at their lives. People will be shocked, people will be

involved." He perceives Yves as a character whom an audience can relate to: "there is a lot of empathy despite the horrible thing that I've done".

The play has been performed for a preview audience, and Hughson was thrilled with their reaction. "It was just — wow — amazing", he says. "Everybody sat there and they were totally freaked. It's a wonderful, beautiful play. It's above and beyond belief."

Hughson is not so taken with this play for lack of theatrical experience. Since graduating from Toronto's Ryerson Theatre School in 1984, he has "never been out of work — touch wood, I'll just do that right now." He has worked for innumerable theatre companies, and has appeared on the television shows *Night Heat*, *Hangin' In*, and *The Edison Twins*, to name only a few.

Hughson was born in Kingston, Ontario, and *Being at Home with Claude* marks his first stay in Edmonton. He plans to return this summer for a role in the Phoenix Theatre production *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, which will be playing at the Fringe Festival. "It's another incredible play", he says. "It's about two Bronx street kids and their fucked up lives. There's a lot of violence stuff but it's incredibly romantic."

"B" gigs lost in the Edmonton cracks?

commentary by Tracy Rowan

Welsh band The Alarm, recently lauded by *Rolling Stone* magazine as one of the bands to watch, blew through Edmonton last week on what was the second date of their North American tour.

One would hardly know it, though, as publicity for the show was almost nonexistent, except for the mentions by the rock writers of the city's two dailies.

The result of such poor promotion and subsequent lack of knowledge about this impressive band was a disappointingly small audience turnout of around 600.

The sad part about all this was that more people didn't have the opportunity to enjoy what was an outstanding live performance by the Alarm, whose credentials include

review by Randal Smathers

It's Friday night and you can't stand the thought of staring at the gap between David Letterman's teeth, but the idea of sitting in a bistro and sipping overpriced cappuccino makes you want to, y'know, like vomit. What's there to, like, do?

For five bucks you can spend an hour and a half watching extroverts career around a fairly seedy little stage, with frequently amusing results. At least you can now that Theatre Network has started its new Theatresports series, *The Late Night Impro Show*.

The audience at the opener, last Friday, seemed to be pretty much acquainted with the Theatresports concept. This involves the audience yelling out suggestions for skits to the participants, who then try and invent something just terribly witty and drool to do with rather incongruous combinations.

The Friday series pits expert-level Theatre jocks against each other, using "adult" humor. This involves little swearing, but you might see a group trying to do something "tasteful" with an epileptic and a stutterer.

opening dates for U2.

Rather than let the pitifully small crowd (which was double the size in Calgary) negatively affect his performance or perception of the city, Mike Peters commented early in the show that the Alarm's first show in the U.K. drew only 20 people. From that point on he and his band mates ignited the convention centre crowd and seized control, carrying the concert-goers through an exceptional array of both old ("58 Guns") and new material, much of it from the latest LP, *Eye of the Hurricane*.

So, you may ask yourself why you haven't heard much of this band, or that only the catchy single "Rain in the Summertime" sounds vaguely familiar. The answer lies in the audible gap between commercial and hardcore FM radio programming in this city.

They failed.

For the most part, however, the teams were fruitful in their labours, and if they weren't, the judges used their veto whistles regularly to euthanise the miscarriages.

The show began with a short warmup routine by The Host, Don Masson (he'll tell no line before its time).

The teams on the first night were three funny guys called **No, No, Not Ritchie** against a much-less funny group called **Speaking of Michaelangelo** in the opening round. A short intermission featured the guitar stylings of **Tall Eddy** and vocalizations by **Evan Grain** (Don't ask me, I've never heard of them before, but there were funny).

No, No, Not Ritchie then went on to face the **Tragically Unhapp** team, *impro a impro*. I forget who won and it just doesn't matter. Neither team seemed all that concerned, as all that really mattered was how they entertained.

I wouldn't want to see this stuff every week, but it is worth a go, especially if you're terminally insomniac.

Unfortunately, some of the most promising "new music" being released is falling into the cracks between CJSR or CBC FM late night programs (considered too radical or weird for some tastes) and the repetitive, top fortyish formats of the other mainstream stations.

The consequence of all this is that Edmonton is in danger of losing its current status on what promoters call the "B" concert circuit, or those venues which seat about 2000 people. Promoters like *Persyscope* can't afford to bring in bands like the Alarm or, say, *Squeeze* when ticket sales don't go.

If FM radio doesn't start responding to this void, Edmonton may become known as the city that can only sell heavy metal or big country names, with little else in between.

Keep an eye out for the LITERARY

SUPPLEMENT

coming to these pages at the end of March or beginning of April

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