

# Saccharine-coated melodrama worth viewing

**The Shooting of Dan McGrew**  
Theatre Network

review by Brenda Waddle

*A bunch of boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon; The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a ragtime tune; Back of the bar, in a solo game, sat Dangerous Dan McGrew, And watching his luck was his light of love, the lady that's known as Lou . . .*

And so began the co-production of "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" by Centre Stage and Theatre Network. Whether the conclusions they drew about Dan's life were anything like what Robert Service had in mind can never be proved, but the spirit and enthusiasm present on the stage would have made any Dawson City concert hall in 1898 jump with energy.

It was not particularly good theatre, but then again, musical melodrama never is in the same class as Ibsen or Shaw. It was, however, rather good melodrama, with an evil villain, bumbling henchmen, and romantic lovers sometimes so sentimental it was acutely nauseating. The audience got into the act, booing the villain and tapping their feet right along with the marvelous piano playing of "The Ragtime Kid", musical director Edward Connell.

Dan McGrew, as played by Bradley C. Rudy, was a grizzled mountain man who tried to let his reputation talk rather than his gun. Rudy has a wonderful deep voice which entirely filled the tiny theatre, whether he was singing the praises of poker in "The Game of Life" or warning his young niece about the dangers of hasty action in the haunting, "By a Hair".

Unfortunately Clarice McCord, "The Lady Known as Lou", did not live up to the fine standards set by her leading man. Although she was a very competent actress, her voice had little power or range, and was more suited for romantic love melodies



Harry Dolan (Blair Haynes) acts villainously towards Lou (Clarice McCord).

than the sultry chorus numbers Lou was called on to perform. This weakness of voice was present in all three female members of the cast. The chorus numbers were unbalanced because the women seemed barely evident.

An outstanding performance was given by Blair Haynes, who played Harry

Dolan, the villain. Haynes gave a new slant to the classic melodramatic villain, giving Dolan the aura of a Mafia don. Haynes had a wonderful singing voice which was unfortunately not highlighted in the show — Dolan had only one brief solo. The script underwent several revisions during production and should have been changed

to accommodate this talent.

Another standout was Robert Maloughney as Officer Clancy, a Sargeant Renfrew clone. His performance was absolutely hilarious, particularly when he explained how all Mountie behavior was directed "By the Book". His mock seriousness and clumsy dancing was a parody of every Mountie who has ever donned the scarlet tunic.

The sets were sparse and yet amazingly complex. Bars miraculously turned into miner's tents, and stair cases changed into beds. Almost all scene changes happened before the curtain on a lit stage. This usually was done smoothly, but a few times poignant lyrical moments were lost because the cast got overzealous and started moving tables and chairs before the scene was complete.

The other aspects of production were kept simple — sometimes too simple. It was hard to believe it was fifty below in Dawson City when someone entered the saloon without a whisp of snow, or even so much as a shiver.

Director Stephen Heatley created one very original piece of stage business, which had the entire audience mesmerized. An entire barroom brawl was performed in slow motion. The whole fight moved like an elaborate ballet — the blocking was complex and extremely effective. A spontaneous ovation sprung up midway through, attesting to the company's skill.

With all this fine work, it's a pity the ending of the play was not a bit more satisfactory. It was a direct rip-off of *The Sting*, right down to the con of the villain. As well as being plagiarized, it was phoney and far too saccharine, even for a melodrama. It seemed like a cop-out, because the writers could not stand the idea of actually killing their hero off. Too bad.

Nevertheless, it all made for an entertaining evening of moustache twirling, poker playing, and love and deception.

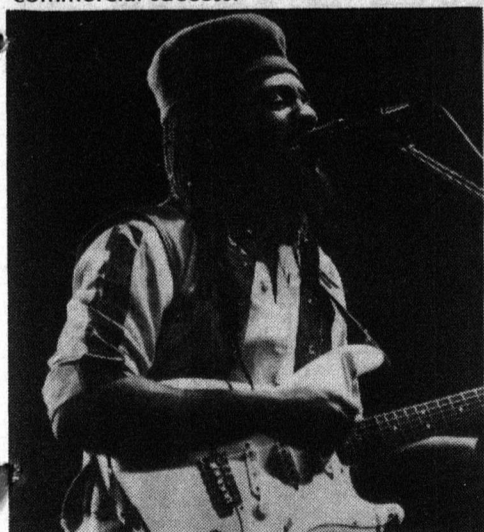
photo Bill Ingles

## Theatre converts to makeshift dance-hall for reggae concert

**Third World**  
SUB Theatre, Nov. 8

review by Patrice Struyk

There's no denying that *Third World* pleased their audience that Tuesday night. After all, they played for three hours and touched quite a range of musical bases. Even reggae bands, it would seem, aim for commercial success.



Iah!

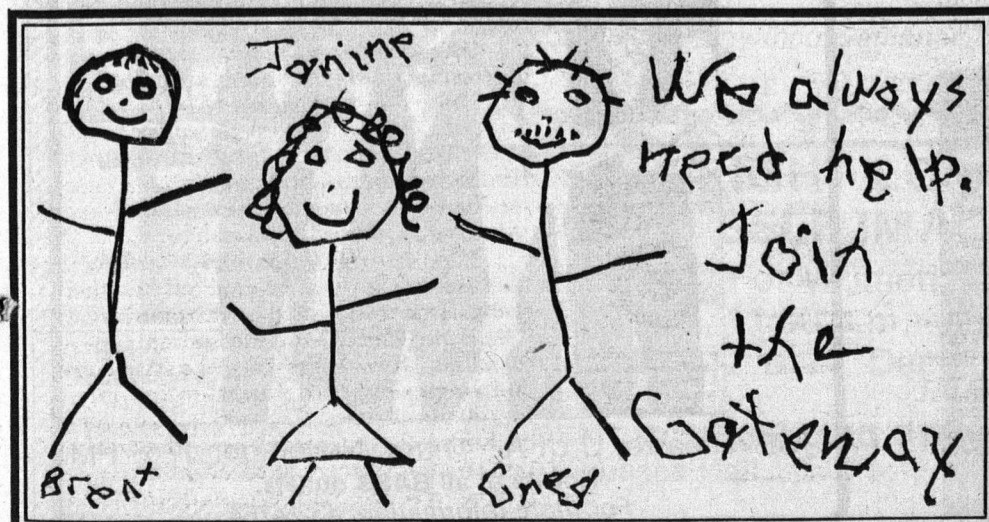
From the first song, the crowd that packed SUB Theatre could barely stay in their seats, waving their arms and lip-synching to favourite and familiar numbers. Songs like "Rock n Rave" and "96 Degrees in the Shade" were in the rhythmic, percussion-based tradition. So were standard but spirited reggae "antheims" like "Now That We've Found Love."

The lyrics were, in true Rastafarian character, inspirational messages of brotherhood and love: "Brother, you've got the power to make a change, sister you've got the power to rearrange..." The band sang for their brothers in Grenada and South Africa, and coaxed the audience into carrying the chorus.

But just when they had the crowd up and dancing in the aisles, Third World's musical fare proved to more diverse than expected.

Ballads were crooned a la Sinatra, Stevie Wonder's "Try Love" was performed with surprising slickness. Guitars wailed with heavy metal overtones. A drum solo ensued. A voice synthesizer came into play. There was even a light show!

No one was complaining, though. The crowd kept on dancing, and brought the band back for an encore. Whatever Third World did, it was as the Jamaicans would say, "Irid!"



**Edmonton Travel Agency Co. Ltd.**

### READING WEEK SPECIALS

**PHOENIX**  
AIR ONLY FROM \$339.00

**PALM SPRINGS**  
AIR ONLY FROM \$339.00

**HAWAII**  
AIR ONLY-MIDWEEK \$569.00  
-WEEKEND \$599.00

### FUN IN THE SUN OR SNOW

**ACAPULCO**  
AIR ONLY FROM \$599.00  
(SAT-SAT VIA WARDAIR)

**SALT LAKE CITY**  
GATEWAY TO SOME OF THE BEST SKIING  
AIR ONLY FROM \$299.00

**VANCOUVER - WHISTLER PLUS BLACKCOMB**  
AIR ONLY FROM \$155.00

ALL INCLUSIVE TOUR PACKAGES AVAILABLE.  
CALL TODAY - DON'T BE DISAPPOINTED  
ASK ABOUT THE INTRAGUARANTEE

### INTRA EDMONTON TRAVEL

•HUB MALL - U of A 433-2494  
•10405 - JASPER AVE 426-3874  
ON CAMPUS FOR OVER 6 YEARS