

Baldry brightens cabaret with non-stop music

Long John Baldry
Dinwoodie, March 16

review by Tom Wilson

The band rips into "Baldry's Out". There is an exodus from the washrooms and from the beer ticket table. Everyone rushes back to their table or to the dance floor. This is no ordinary Dinwoodie crowd, but then, this is no ordinary band either.

From his theme song, "Baldry's Out", to the final encore, the crowd was in Long John Baldry's spacious palm. After twenty-odd years of singing blues-based rock and roll, Baldry has learned how to please an audience.

Baldry first appeared on the music scene during Britain's blues revival in the 1960's. Early on, he played in bands with Rod Stewart and with Eric Clapton. The gravelly voiced baritone has recorded a number of hit singles on his own, including "Walk Me Out in The Morning Dew", "Baldry's Out", "A Thrills a Thrill", "Don't Lay no Boogie Woogie on the King of Rock and Roll," and "You've lost That Loving Feeling", all of which were performed at the Cabaret.

One of the reasons for the show's success was the uninterrupted two and a half hours of music. The second reason, directly related to the first, is Baldry's selflessness or self-confidence. I can't decide which. Baldry's willingness to give up the stage to his band while he catches his breath or whets his whistle shows what calibre of performer he is. A lesser performer would insist that the band rests when he rests, not wanting to share the lime-light, especially when the band is as talented as Baldry's is.

Number one on the talent list is vocalist

Kathi McDonald, who was the accompanying vocalist on the single "You've Lost that Loving Feeling". McDonald's sublimely soulful vocals made for powerful renditions of Marianne Faithful's "Broken English", Otis Reddings "Respect" and a version of Janice Joplin's "A Little Piece of My Heart" that sent shivers up my spine, it was done well.

Another crowd pleaser was pianist Roy Young. His covers of Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard hit songs had the audience singing the choruses and dancing simultaneously.

Of course, backing the vocalists was a band of crack musicians.

Then, it was the band's turn to take a breather. Baldry, armed only with an acoustic guitar, sang some traditionally flavoured blues. The crowds favourable response to the acoustic set is testimony to Baldry's considerable talent.

With the band's return came some fast-paced rock and roll that resulted in a demand for two encores. During the second encore, Baldry delivered a monologue attacking Burton Cummings: "What is the difference between Burton Cummings and a Spanish fighting bull? Well, the bull has the horns in front of the ass."

"Did you hear about the time a fan got up on stage and punched Burton Cummings? It was the first time the fan hit the shit." Then, appropriately, the band launched into "Don't Lay no Boogie Woogie on the King of Rock and Roll."

A talented man surrounded by talented people. The quality of the music ensured a successful show and the ambience generated by Baldry and his band gave the show that little bit extra that made the show a party.



The tall one's Baldry.

photo Bill St. John

Trauma of reform explored in MFA show

Getting Out by Marsha Norman
MFA Project

Fine Arts Media Room, March 17, 18

review by Christina Starr

Getting Out is a realistic and brutal look at what it means to be a woman in prison, and a woman trying to readjust after prison life.

There's no sugar her; nothing to soften the blows nor anything to make us think that maybe it really isn't that bad.

Getting Out is a terrifying experience; not only for Arlene, recently released from seven years of tough, cold, unsympathetic prison life, but also for those of us who sat in our comfortable chairs, wearing our fashionable clothes, spectators to the events in the life of a young girl who never had a chance.

The drama portrays two separate time periods simultaneously. We watch the newly reformed Arlene (Clarice McCord) as she leaves prison, determined to make something of herself so that she may be a fit mother to care for her son, and as she struggles to deal with the people and events of her past life when she was known as Arlie, "the toughest bitch you ever saw," played mostly in the confines of a small prison cell by Becky Starr.

Arlie is tough because she has had to be in order to survive. Brought up in a large

family with little love and less money, sexually abused and beaten by her father, and made fun of at school because her mother works late at night, Arlie decides to fight back. And fight she does. Stealing, prostitution, and drug dealing become her way of life; fighting comes with the territory. Verbally and physically, she's a "hateful, hateful kid."

She decides to rid herself of her hateful side with the help of a chaplain who calls her by her full name, and who is the only person who respects her for being human and for having all those complex emotions and anxieties that being human entails. Ironically, we never see the chaplain; we only hear from Arlene his kindness towards her and feel through her words his compassion.

But the change is not easy. All those who knew the old Arlie refuse to believe that she's gone. Before Arlene has a chance to do things her way, she's accused of still being a whore by her mother, suffers an attempt at rape by the security guard who has driven her home, and is badgered by her former pimp (and father of her child) to come and work for him again in New York. Pathetically, she still harbours tender feelings for him.

The contrast between the two personae presented throughout the performance is repeatedly shocking, and perfectly presented by the two young actresses. Both schemes work towards the climax when, crushed by the news that the chaplain has been transferred, and spurred on the idea that the meek shall inherit the earth, Arlie, in prison, decides to kill her hateful self by stabbing her chest with a fork. Simultaneously, in her new life, Arlene desperately recounts the horrifying moment to her one new acquaintance, Ruby, as a culmination of all the mistrust and scorn she's been treated with so far.

The terror of witnessing the event and at the same time witnessing the desperate

desires for which it was committed, and the pain it has left in Arlene, is almost unbearable. She has psychologically killed Arlie, but at the same time, she has destroyed a part of herself that she can never forget. Arlie protected her; Arlie was her friend.

Getting Out is a daring performance: challenging not only to those who performed it, but challenging also for those who watched it to acknowledge the reality of Arlene's story. *Getting Out* is not only about prison, it's about getting out of ourselves to have a look at what's around us. The entire cast, and especially Marcy Anne Goldman who directed them are to be greatly commended for giving us a bitter taste of that reality.

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