

'18 Wheels

Realism gets lost in the jokes



'18 Wheels' rolls into Neptune

by donalee Moulton

Take 2 females, 3 males, 4 mediocre voices, 1 fine vocalist, 1 Canadian play, lots of Country and Western tunes and you have **18 Wheels** Neptune Theatre's premiere play.

18 Wheels by John Gray provides a comical look at Canada and her traditions through the blue collar eyes of our greatest travellers—the tractor trailer drivers. Comparable to Rick Salutin's *Les Canadiens*, Gray has taken an everyday aspect of Canadian life and made it the format for presenting, satirizing, and hopefully, understanding Canada. Unlike Salutin, he goes one step further and gives his C&W performers personalities. It is more than a play about Canada, it is also about some of her people—her "highwaymen".

Comically written **18 Wheels** is more than a fun night's entertainment although at times it seems as if Gray made the play too funny—the realism gets lost in the jokes. The characters, as portrayed on stage, add to this "all fun, no meaning" image. Wanda Wilkinson and Ross

Douglas in particular overdo their parts. They're acting out a skit, not performing as Denny Doherty and Susan Wright consistently do. The former make me nervous; the latter relaxed. It's the difference between just being on stage and good acting. Keith Dinicol fluctuates, sometimes good, more often blase, seldom as bad as Wilkinson.

Country and Western music suffers at the hands of these performers, but then they'd tell you that was the idea. What doesn't suffer is the lyrics; they catch the image of truck drivers, Canadiana, fun, and of course, heart-break.

Set designer Guido Tondino deserves special mention, especially the movable truck which was so unexpected and believable it takes first place in the show's line up of stars. Second place must go to Denny Doherty for being first a singer but such a good actor that he had more impact than "the professionals". And third place goes to John Neville who thought **18 Wheels** and his cast was so good they deserved a standing ovation. Which he gave them. The only one in the house to do so.

Baldrey is back



Long John Baldrey father of the white blues

by Scott Martin

John Baldrey is playing at the **Misty Moon** all this week. I guess you could say he is back by popular demand because he sure is tops with the people here in Metro.

Those who saw Baldrey at the Atlantic Jam or the last time he was at the Moon, may remember his 6'8" long and lean physique covered with a leopard skin jumpsuit. This time he

added a twist to his image. There was a slight feeling of satire in his military green coveralls and his bright American flag flashing on his left shoulder. This was topped with a maroon British army beret. With his long hair hanging out from underneath and his contented... almost silly grin, he looked a very good natured gentleman indeed.

Commenting on the warmup band,

Canadian Conspiracy had a style of music that was not complimentary to the crowd's anticipation of Baldrey's bluesy quality. I was repelled by the distorted amplification of the horn section. I cannot say that they were all bad, however. At times they were strangely melodious as in their medley of Paul McCartney tunes.

Baldrey's supporting band finally came up and jammed for a while to warmup. The thing I can most remark on was their togetherness. The bass player, Carl Rucker, was excellent and through him the band did not deviate from its inner harmony.

Katherine MacDonald followed, and was most noted for her voice control. She was unbelievable... no wonder she is the Dynamic first lady of rock and roll. She reminded one of Janis Joplin.

Katherine sang two electrifying numbers until the magic moment when the entire room was flooded with John Baldrey's presence. He appeared confident and relaxed. He established an instantaneous rapport with his audience, the magnitude of which did not wane for the whole of the evening. His and Katherine MacDonald's voices soared to heights that would rival a mountain-top. I was pleased with the sound system and the acoustics were such that every sound was crystal-clear.

The instrumentation created a soaring sensation. Playing such numbers as "A Thrill is a Thrill", "It Ain't Easy", "Baldrey's Out", and of course the heartwarming duet, "We've Lost That Loving Feeling", Long John Baldrey stirred the crowd into such ecstasy that it can best be described as "bringing the house down".

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