

## Etheridge impresses with concert in half-full SUB

Melissa Etheridge  
SUB Theatre  
Tuesday, October 4

review by Dragos Ruiu

Melissa Etheridge...Wow. Her performance at SUB Theatre Tuesday night was simply amazing — and the audience thought so too. Almost immediately after the first two songs people were cheering wildly. She received two standing ovations and encores.

The SUB Theatre stage looked almost barren with her minimalist equipment set-up: one keyboard, two guitar stands, a drum kit, and three monitor speakers. Then she came out and rocked the house down.

Etheridge's unique hard rock-folk music is driven by her simple guitar sound and powerful voice. Her guitar playing is good, not tremendous, but rhythmically powerful. Her voice is excellent, and her song lyrics, which focus on heartbreak and love, seem sincere. But when these are added together, the result is greater than the sum of the parts.

She threw in some country licks that betrayed her Leavenworth, Kansas upbringing, but for the most part her guitar work was in a clean blues-rock vein. Clean is the major adjective at work for Melissa. Her songs weren't loud, they were candid and skillful. She didn't have to use volume to hide flaws in her music — because there were none.

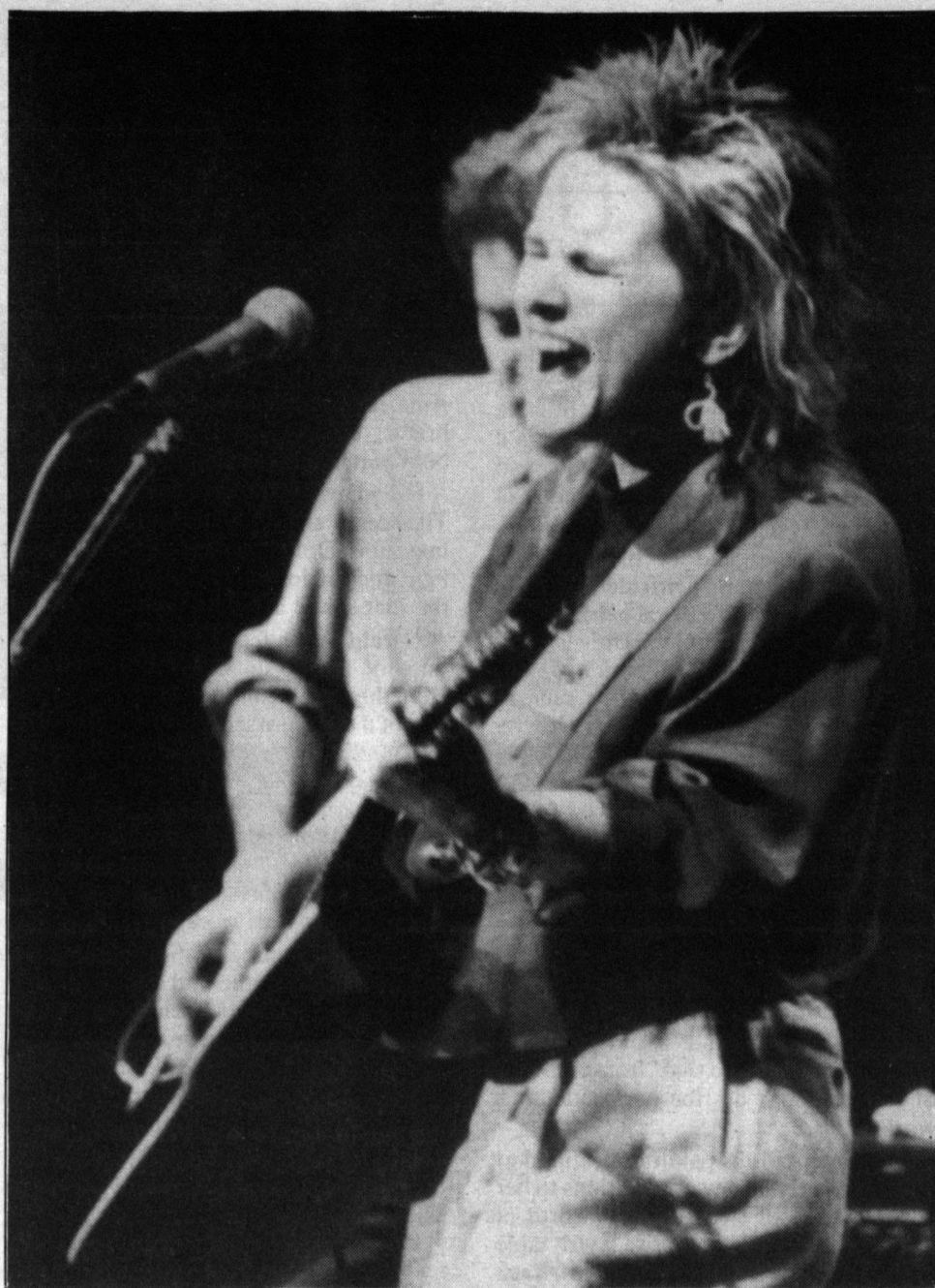
Etheridge seemed to build a synergy with the audience. The entire audience was tapping their feet and swaying to the music by the end of the performance, which appeared to reach a peak with a new song entitled "Brave and Crazy". Then, just when you thought the crowd couldn't get more hyped, her next song, "Skin Deep", started a spontaneous round of clapping from the audience to match the drum beat. Nearly everyone joined in. It was overwhelming...

Despite the fact that Etheridge only has one album out, she put on an almost two hour show, playing many songs that weren't on her album. By far the most unique song she did was a solo piece done on the back of her guitar. "I wrote this one while I was driving home in my car, tappin' on my steering wheel," she said by way of introduction.

Backing her up very well was Kevin McCormick on bass. McCormick showed some definite jazz training with several of his solos, and he and Etheridge built up some very snazzy rhythms which traded off with her guitar playing.

Etheridge's songs ranged from slow and soulful to frenetic and wild. She was an exciting performer to watch as she constantly bounced around the stage, hefting her large acoustic/electric guitar wildly.

The almost full theatre and Etheridge hit it off very well. At the end of the performance, she said "...Edmonton is OK. I'm gonna come back." We can only hope she does, because she is going places. And anyone who missed her first concert in Edmonton should be sorry.



Frank Coughlan

Melissa Etheridge played to an enthusiastic audience in SUB Theatre Tuesday night.

## Desire brings angels down to earth

*Wings Of Desire* ★★★  
Princess Theatre  
October 7 - 13

review by Kevin Law

Many mortal men have envied angels, often wishing to become such a being. But what if an angel wished to become human? That is the scenario presented by Wim Wenders in his intimate and mystical new film *Wings of Desire*.

Damiel and Cassiel are the angels of Wenders' vision. They are the guardians of the city of Berlin, condemned to "observe, collect, testify, preserve". They can comfort the lost, weak, or lonely with a celestial touch, but never can they participate in the tastes, smells, or feelings of mortal beings. Their insights into humanity do not repulse them, but rather attract them to the constraints and pleasures of earthly existence. They want to "live human life in all its pretense... to be excited by mind, meal, and line of neck." When Damiel falls in love with a young trapeze artist, his eventual metamorphosis and redemption by love becomes the central thread linking Wenders' esoteric narrative.

Like the pioneers of German cinema, F. W. Murnau and Fritz Lang, Wenders utilizes sensuous black and white cinematography (beautifully photographed by Henry Aleken) to enhance the formalist confines of his scenes. It is the world perspective of the angels, their points-of-view, that Wenders achieves, and the result is an emotional luxuriance that balances between romantic sentimentality and abstract obliqueness.

*Wings of Desire* is simultaneously about the innate innocence of children and the lost innocence of adults in the form of the separation of compassion from the human spirit. All this is brilliantly portrayed by Wenders' rejection of conventional narrative syntax. There is little dialogue. The audience, like the angels, hears not only the thoughts, but the innermost desires of Berliners through monologues composed of poetic language. Interestingly enough, the English subtitles, usually a source of annoyance, actually add to the poetic quality of the language used because it is being read like a poem.

There is a melancholy tone to Wenders' vision of Berlin, but it is poignantly lyrical as well. The ethereal quality comes down to earth at the end when Damiel gets his wish and the film turns to lush color, but for those not patient with semantic filmmaking, *Wings of Desire* may seem long and pointless in between, for there are no blazing gun battles or screaming car chases, just a superb cameo by Peter Falk as himself. But for those who do not impose boundaries upon their film appreciation sensibilities, this film will remind why Europe stays on the cutting edge of cinema.



*Wings of Desire*: what happens when an angel wants to be mortal?

## Peace Book suffers from poor documentation

*The Peace Book*  
Black Rose Books

review by Moira Coulter

If a book is entitled *The Peace Book*, you could safely assume that its central topic would be peace. While peace is the subject of most of this slim volume, its compiler, Ireni Kai Eleftheria, has also promoted women's rights and labor organizations, and has included criticisms on the institution of government.

*The Peace Book* is a compilation of facts, essays, historical information, news articles, poetry, and quotations extracted from the writings and sayings of philosophers, activists and writers. The variety of forms is admirable, making the book

Peace... is considered in conditions that are distinctly unpeaceful.

interesting and preventing a weighty topic from becoming heavy reading. The various subjects covered are sometimes distracting, though, and often completely irrelevant to the issue of peace.

It is in the pages devoted to quotations that peace is subordinated to other apparent interests of the compiler. Where is the concern for peace in this quote of Gloria Steinem: "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle." Or what does peace have to do with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's attack on laws: "Laws: We know what they are and what they are worth! They are spider-webs for the rich and mighty, steel chains for the poor and

weak, fishing nets in the hands of the government."

Peace, when discussed, is considered in conditions and instances that are distinctly unpeaceful. The book features six "Fact files" that list and describe various aspects of the nuclear arms race, from the description of some nuclear weapons to information on the number of nuclear tests. The focus is definitely on the lack of peace, which, admittedly, is understandable. Peace is always discussed in relation to its antithesis; war. These fact files and other notes on the negative social, economic, and political effects of nuclear weapons are clear, succinct, and highly informative.

Not enough care, though, has been given to the presentation of the material. In one short section, a list containing five points gives what seems to be some negative effects of nuclear weapons. I emphasize the word "seems", because the list is given no title or introduction. It is inserted without due warning into the text. In many cases, the sources for the material are unclear or simply do not exist. This apparent negligence towards sources greatly decreases the credibility of this book.

A book that contains such disparate information and tries to address the broad topic of peace requires an introduction that would define the work's purpose, or that would, at the very least, explain the method of arranging the material. In *The Peace Book*, the page-long introduction consists of lists of figures on military expenditures — material that should be covered in the body of the text.

Without a stated purpose, *The Peace Book* is nothing more than randomly chosen articles and sayings, presented with little discernable order. Peace is a powerfully appealing issue which this book doesn't treat with due justice.