

arts & entertainment

Sensually mixed fluid-motion & defiance

by Daniel Spencer

George Stamos and Gwen Noah, Halifax dancer/choreographers, joined forces for the presentation of *Proceed With Caution*. Wednesday and Thursday evenings (October 27 and 28) of dance included solos by both artists

DANCE
Gwen Noah & George Stamos
Proceed With Caution
The Church

and the premiere of a collaborative duet. This performance was presented by Gwen Noah Dance as part of an ongoing series of collaborative projects in contemporary dance.

Proceed With Caution was dance as it should be. Gwen Noah is a strong independent dancer. George Stamos is a fluid-motion natural. Noah's defiant feel moves her from with the music to countering it and back. She seems always to partner the music. Complementing this style Stamos becomes the music.

Noah's struggle for her dance and choreography blossoms in a stillness of dawn and the wind-motion of gusty fall: still, slow, quiet, then fast, bright, motion.

Where Noah is centre of her dance,

Stamos almost fades away. He's replaced by music manifest in body. Where experience may still be growing, the music and choreography flows through him creating no boundaries where once was a dance floor, lights, music and a man.

Their solos open and create the space of their art. Then their duet forms new dimension. The natural flow of their bodies, the hours of practice, and their love of dance mix well. Yet to one who has seen lots of such dance, there was a taint of disappointment.

Coached in strong approval and praise, a member of the audience helped clarify what was for me but a shadow at the edge of my enjoyment. Where the moves were strong and well performed they tended not to go beyond others who had used similar moves. Dancing well together, they struggle to find a balance between beautifully sensual and cliché sexual leaving them seemingly somewhat uncomfortable with body contact. Where they dance apart expressively exploring each other's personal space, they fall short in exploring each other's bodies.

To those in the audience new or with only limited contact to this dance style, the performance was magic. It expressed sensuality, indi-



The repose of dawn's stillness from the wind-motion of gusty fall.

PHOTO: MARK SIMKINS

viduality and the mixing of minds and bodies. To those regular to the scene there was a lack in depth of colour and originality.

Nonetheless such critique comes

from a lover of modern dance. It aims only at encouraging and strengthening a dance style that we need more of in Halifax. This dance packed 'The Church', located on North Street,

where it was performed. The minimal charge made it readily accessible and its power left most captivated and satisfied, yet ready for more.

The Sandman reveals literary and graphic genius

by Leslie J Furlong

There are numerous ways of writing an introduction to a review of a graphic novel-slash-comic book in the mainstream press (I know that the *Gazette* isn't considered by most of its readers,

BOOKS
The Sandman: Fables and Reflections
Neil Gaiman, et al.
DC/Vertigo

and all of its contributors, as mainstream, but it ain't *The Comics Journal*, either). Ninety percent of them are apologetic in tone, or at the very least take a defensive posture. Of the ten percent remaining most become confrontational, damning the presupposed

ignorance and arrogance of those who refuse to recognize comics as an art form, often citing similarities with jazz with regards to its origins and growth of acceptance in the public arena.

Quite honestly, neither approach is better than the other, and both cannot deflect the barrage of four-colour inanities that assault the average adult's senses when picking up a litre of milk at the corner store. Those are the images that linger, and the only way to break that image is to put something else in front of their eyes that doesn't insult them and get them to read it. That's not an easy task at the best of times, but thanks to writers like Neil Gaiman, that task has become a little less daunting.

Fables and Reflections is the sixth

volume to be released which collects together issues of the extremely popular monthly comic *The Sandman*. Also known as Dream, the Sandman is one of seven brothers and sisters that together are known as The Endless (Death, Delirium - once known as Delight, Desire, Despair, Destiny, and Destruction, in addition to Dream), a group of beings whose powers supersede those of all others, as they represent the motivations for all actions.

While most of the volumes are by and large novels, this sixth volume brings together a number of stand-alone stories under one cover. The themes are as varied as the artists who draw them, ranging from the darkest horror to whimsical fantasy. All the stories are marked by what has to be

almost manic research of history, mythology, and folklore as well as a unique gift for storytelling. You wouldn't want to go head-to-head with Gaiman on *Jeopardy!*, but you wouldn't mind him correcting Alex Trebek on the finer points of the French Revolution or Baba Yaga.

Though this is a book that showcases a writer of much ability, the visual element of the graphic narrative is undiminished. The art from story to story varies in style but all capture the mood expertly as Gaiman writes to an artist's strengths. The most impressively rendered story in the collection is the book's closer, "Ramadan", intricately drawn by P. Craig Russell, in which the fate of a wondrous and mythical city of Baghdad is decided by its king and the

Lord of Dream.

To be a writer that can create unique and beautiful visions with such variety is a gift. To be able to do so on a consistent basis, especially in an undeservedly maligned storytelling medium (hell, even television gets more respect), deserves praise and attention as well.



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