

# Entertainment

## Jammin' at the Caribbean Music Festival



"Jabba" and "Suddy" perform with reunited UJAMMA crew (K. Rainville photo)

by M

Like everyone else at this time of year, I've been feeling overwhelmed by the seemingly endless flow of assignments sent my way by my professors. So when the Entertainment Editor offered me a free ticket to last Saturday night's Caribbean Music Festival, and the chance to goof off for an evening, I immediately jumped at the opportunity. But there was a catch - I had to write this article. Yet another assignment...

Once I arrived at the SUB cafeteria for the Music Festival, I was pleasantly surprised to see Caribbean style food being sold, a nice change for someone dependent upon McConnell Hall for daily nourishment. Then it occurred to me that I'm as unfamiliar with the music of the Caribbean as I am with the food.

I might not be the best qualified person to do this review, but an assignment is an assignment.

I was a little disappointed that bar services wasn't ready with Caribbean-style drinks to go with the Caribbean style food, but at least I got my rum and Coke, so I was ready to settle down and enjoy the show. Before the show even began, I noticed that the mood of the audience was relaxed and pretty mellow. Before I went, I didn't know whether or not to expect a semi-formal kind of cultural event. The cafeteria was filled with a very *in-formal* crowd, average age somewhere around grad-school. Just the right audience to find a combination of high energy and casual dress.

The show was divided into 2

parts, with most of the acts presented in the first half. The second half was reserved for former members of UJAMMA. The setup was sort of like a cabaret show. It was MC'd by Teah Gosman and Steven Harrison, who introduced the acts with minimal commentary. That was left to the performers, adding to the Festival's informal atmosphere.

The show started with a performance that immediately grabbed the audience's attention. Christy Mercado sang a Spanish song. I didn't understand a word of the language but her voice is clear and brilliant, and it carried the force of the emotion filling her delivery. That was followed by Chandra<sup>2</sup>, those amazing Chandra cousins, Mark and

Devon. I've seen them perform at the Red'n'Black, two years ago unless I'm mistaken, so I was able to compare the two performances. Their sound is definitely maturing and I was impressed at their deft (yes deft!) handling of their selections, contemporary songs.

Eight Boots, comprised of four local singers, performed "ska" pieces. It was entirely *acapella* and the style had a very close resemblance to do-wop. The delivery wasn't as tight as it could've been in spots, but Eight Boots gives an energetic show. And they nailed those high notes.

Common Ground is a well-known local act among the university crowd. It caught me off guard when they were introduced, since I've never known them to do anything like the Caribbean music I do know about. And they didn't - instead they did Steppenwolf and the Doors. Far from having any criticism for their actual performance, the audience loved it, and so did I. The thematic conflict with the rest of the Festival leaves me a bit perplexed, though. Maybe they were there for stylistic contrast?

Cesar Morales, a native of El Salvador, gave a moving performance of Spanish-language songs from the Caribbean, accompanying himself with guitar. It's a strange experience to be part of an audience which sits mesmerized while it is serenaded in a foreign language. Morales is a true artist.

Aurelius Gordon, inevitably, put in an appearance, performing on guitar with Gordon Mosher on saxophone. Their spirited up-tempo selections did well to balance off the wide variety of musical styles presented in the Festival's first half.

The second Half, featuring former UJAMMA members, was worth the \$5.00 ticket price alone. From what I know about reggae, audience participation is encouraged. Sure enough, the band members encouraged people to get up and dance and sing along. One of my big regrets is that I never saw UJAMMA perform when the band was still going. Their legendary status around Fredericton is well-known to me, but I never expected them to be as good as they were Saturday night. They're better than half the acts that usually give concerts in these parts. The audience was more enthusiastic and seemed to enjoy itself more than most concert audiences I've seen. And for the price of a Festival ticket, they were definitely a better bargain.

It's a shame that more undergraduate students don't attend these cultural events on campus, especially when it is organized as a very inexpensive, good quality concert as Saturday's Caribbean Music Festival was. Still, it was only the third annual. Once the reputation of the event grows, it will be interesting to see how its popularity should develop. To the organizers, congratulations for an enjoyable evening.



## Secret Garden a treasure for the entire family

by Carla Lam

TNB's presentation of "The Secret Garden," is a refreshingly innocent, comical, witty and charming production. Based on Francis Hodysen Burnett's book, and set in Yorkshire England in 1907, it is a fairytale - complete with a forbidden garden, mystery, intrigue, and love.

The plot centres on Archibald Craven (Stewart Arnot) who, since the tragic death of his only true love Mary (Deborah Drakeford), has detached himself from life. Frequent visions of

Mary's ghost both sadden, and inspire him, but his condition remains largely the same. Two consequences of the tragedy were the quarantining of their son Colin (Lorne Pandy) and their beautiful garden, because now both were too painful for Archibald to acknowledge.

Misselthwaite manor, stagnant and lifeless, seems doomed until the arrival of Mary Lennox (Karen Bernstein) - Archibald's orphaned niece. Many adds humor, and color to the plot with her obnoxious and pugnacious nature. Es-

caping from India's cholera epidemic, Mary has been sent for an indefinite period of time to regain her health. Much to the dismay of Archibald's evil, and controlling nephew - Doctor Pitcher (Lorne Pandy), and the head housekeeper, Mrs. Medlock (Paula Wing), Mary begins to unlock Misselthwaite's mysteries while simultaneously finding the key to her own happiness.

Keeping with the happily - ever - after tradition; good out powers evil, the supernatural is put to rest, and all is well. Ben Weatherstaff (Douglas Campbell) -

the gardener, remains loyal to the deceased Mary, acting as Archibald's conscience by subtly reminding him of the past. Martha Sowerby (Jenny Munday) - Mrs. Medlock's servant - is an eccentric yet likeable chatterbox who leaks many of the household secrets to Mary.

Throughout the play a parallel is drawn between Mary's personal rebirth, and the rebirth of Archibald and his manor. She catalyzes the reunion of Archibald, and Colin - releasing Mary's spirit at last. Dickon Sowerby (Scott R. Mealey) in turn, by befriend-

ing Mary, has set off a chain reaction of love and happiness.

Every once and a while a person deserves an escape from reality. "The Secret Garden" evokes the Christmas spirit. It will make you feel all warm and fuzzy inside - why not see for yourself?

*The Secret Garden continues in Fredericton until December 4th and then tours the province until December 18th. Special ticket prices apply to children under the age of 12 for this family oriented production.*

