

ARTS

BOHEMIA

a column
by Ira Nayman

It was the sort of argument that only happens at two in the morning at a party at a friend's house. Somebody said that *Saturday Night Live* was being milked for its reputation, that the name should have been changed when the first cast left. My feeling was that as long as the show was funny, the name wouldn't matter that much.

But, of course, *Saturday Night Live* isn't funny; it hasn't been for a few years.

There's nothing mysterious about its rapid decline, either: the writing sucks. Instead of building to a proper punch-line, sketches wander aimlessly; instead of adding new elements and upping the ante, sketches repeat their original premise ad nauseum.

The writing is frequently puerile. Ten minutes were wasted on a sketch in a nudist colony, the point of which was that the word "penis" was spoken every few seconds (comparisons of male genitalia were made, a song was sung to it, etc.). The sketch wasn't funny, it was embarrassing, like watching children write obscenities in chalk on a school wall.

Or, consider the episode where host Andrew Dice Clay is shown by the devil what would happen if he had not hosted: Nora Dunn would be crushed under Sinead O'Connor's speaker (both women, offended by Clay's sexist humour, refused to appear with him). Like much of what passes for humour on the current *Saturday Night Live*, this was a release of anger, unleavened by any wit or creativity whatsoever.

The writers on the show, including most cast members, seem to have confused attitude with comedy. While this may satisfy the "hip" audience



Old *SNL* star Bill Murray (in a scene from his latest movie, *Quick Change*) — they don't make them like that any more.

it is trying to reach, it wears thin pretty quickly for people looking for genuine entertainment.

Finally, the talent of the performers varies wildly. Dunn, Jon Lovitz and Dana Carvey are excellent sketch performers who would probably have not been out of place in the original cast. Unfortunately, the rest of the cast lies somewhere between okay and mediocre. This is in direct contrast to the original cast, in which every performer was very good.

This year is the 15th anniversary of *Saturday Night Live*. Although it's not the best note to leave on, it's certainly time the show was put to rest.

Sketch Pad's alternate comedy

by Brett Poland

Corporate ladder climbing reduced to "Shit! Shit! You're it!", two Spicoli clones (*Fast Times at Ridgemount High*) trapped in the Exhibition Rotor Ride and a homosexual construction worker with suicidal tendencies graced the stage at Sketch Pad Friday night.

The evening's entertainment was courtesy of "Fred's Bicycle Repair Shop," "Plead the Fifth" and "Six Flying Hamsters." Hilarious and delightfully rude (at times, sick!) are the words that could be used to describe these groups.

At "Fred's Bicycle Repair Shop" the humour was complemented by talented acting. Ever sit down with your best friend and play Spin the Bottle? Met anyone lately with schizophrenic urges to impersonate and degrade Jacques Cousteau?

With "Plead the Fifth," anyone who watches PBS (Channel 17 in Buffalo) would have laughed til they cried at the twisted depiction of a drunken Goldie pleading for pledges, or the *Twenty Thousand Dollar Pyramid* played with "Fuck" as the word category.

On the other hand, there were "Six Flying Hamsters," and fly they did not. On a political forum they would have been fine; but, as any York professor can tell you, intellectualizing and dry humour do not mix. Thankfully, the sets were only ten minutes long, allowing the other two groups to carry the show.

"Fred's Bicycle Repair Shop," made up of Andrew Pearce, Doug Morency and Peter Ivaskiv, will be playing Sneaky Dees downtown July 22, then back to the Sketch Pad (508 Queen Street West) July 24-26. "Plead the Fifth," Rick Wharton, Sean Tweedley and John Healy, will also be back at the Sketch Pad July 24-26.

You may choke at the eight dollar cover fee, but if you want to find out why cows moo and how to get to Christopher Robins' playhouse, these two groups offer an evening of alternate fun.

Lesbian and Gay Cabaret full of humour and education

by Melanie Aguila

The Lesbian and Gay Cabaret
A Space

Co-ordinated by Meryn Cadell,
Elaine Carol and Gregory Wight

On June 29 and 30, five days after Gay Pride Day, A Space held the second annual performance event by lesbian and gay artists entitled *The Lesbian and Gay Cabaret*. A Space is an artist-run centre with several committees that programme their annual schedule. One of the committees, "Queer Girls," specializes in lesbian arts.

The first evening included performances by Tannis Atkinson, Dan Wordock, Audrey Butler, Karen Augustine, Marcie Rogers, and Sky (a.k.a. Jane) Gilbert. It was also hosted by two coordinators, Elaine Carol and Gregory Wight.

The artists turned the gallery into a cabaret filled with humor, wit and education. At a personal level, they shared their thoughts, experiences, and feelings with the audience.

Marcie Rogers played the convincing role of a cowgirl who shot and killed men to avoid marrying them. She explored the issues behind women and guns, suggesting that guns possess some kind of sexiness and give the holder control over people's lives.

Rogers also pointed out the irony that only women can end lives, as well as bear new ones. Because of this, women can be thought of as having more sexual power than men. Rogers could have headed the women's lib of the west, since she dared to be different from other American frontier women.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS, is an issue which has brought the gay and lesbian community closer together in terms of support, political action, and unity. AIDS activist Dan Wordock began his performance with a provocative



Melanie Aguila photo

Marcie Rogers plays a cowgirl in the *Lesbian and Gay Cabaret* at A Space.

dance. He later discussed his experiences as a "person living with AIDS" (PLWA). He said it was important for a PLWA to still feel sexual. (Having AIDS, does not mean an end to sex. A condom used with water-based lube and spermicide can be used as protection against the virus.)

Wordock's performance had a personal touch because of its informality; he didn't have to memorize any lines since it was his life he was talking about.

Karen Augustine did a multimedia performance on women and AIDS. She used slide projections of women and their lovers, written text which provided information on women and AIDS and a pre-recorded voice that accompanied the images and words. Augustine's performance was especially important, as she emphasized that not enough was known about lesbians and their relation to AIDS.

Spencer Rowe gave a simpler, yet expressive, visual performance. He wore a black suit strapped with white sticks, some of which protruded from his limbs. The sticks crippled his actions into short, stiff movements, and the vertical wooden bars acted as a cage-like barrier from the rest of the world. He lip synced a song which had the repetitive line, "I'm not your prisoner."

The puppet-like movements made him appear like a marionette controlled by society and unable to communicate his feelings and desires.

Straight society has not yet accepted gay and lesbian subject matter, because the majority of heterosexuals would prefer to experience art dealing with heterosexual topics. This was reflected in the cabaret, because the terminology used and the way the audience was addressed assumed that the crowd was lesbian and gay.

Also, it appeared that the people in the crowd already knew each other. This gave the night an intimate atmosphere, but at the same time a stranger who didn't know anyone felt like an outsider.

The cabaret gave lesbians and gays something to which they could relate. Instead of trying to identify with heterosexual arts, which in most cases assume their audience is heterosexual, this provided them with an alternative. Lesbian and gay artists were brought together and given exposure as "lesbian and gay" artists in a performance which also gave heterosexuals a sense of gay and lesbian life.

FACULTY AND STUDENTS

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