

Science centre highlights skylights

Pink Floyd Skylights Space Sciences Centre

review by Melinda Vester

Pink Floyd Skylights is probably the best laser light show presented at the Edmonton Space Sciences Centre to date. This multimedia production actually conforms to the themes of the songs.

Opening Halloween weekend to sell-out crowds, *Pink Floyd Skylights* consists of lasers, slides, star lights, animated figures and flashes.

The laser patterns are emitted from a black tower in the Margaret Zeidler Star Theatre. In the tower there are many scanning mirrors that project a beam of a two watt krypton-argon laser. The laser produces a multi-spectral beam whose colors can be separated and projected. Most of the laser part of the show is preprogrammed, but there is a great deal of manual work left for the projectionist.

It takes from 150 to 200 slide projectors to create the special effects of the show. These projectors are stationed around the center and the outside of the theatre. The projectors are able to create a panoramic view of scenes photographed all over the world, then compiled at the Centre. One man operates all the slide projectors and the Zeiss projector with the help of a computer.

The Zeiss projector is the most impressive looking piece of equipment in

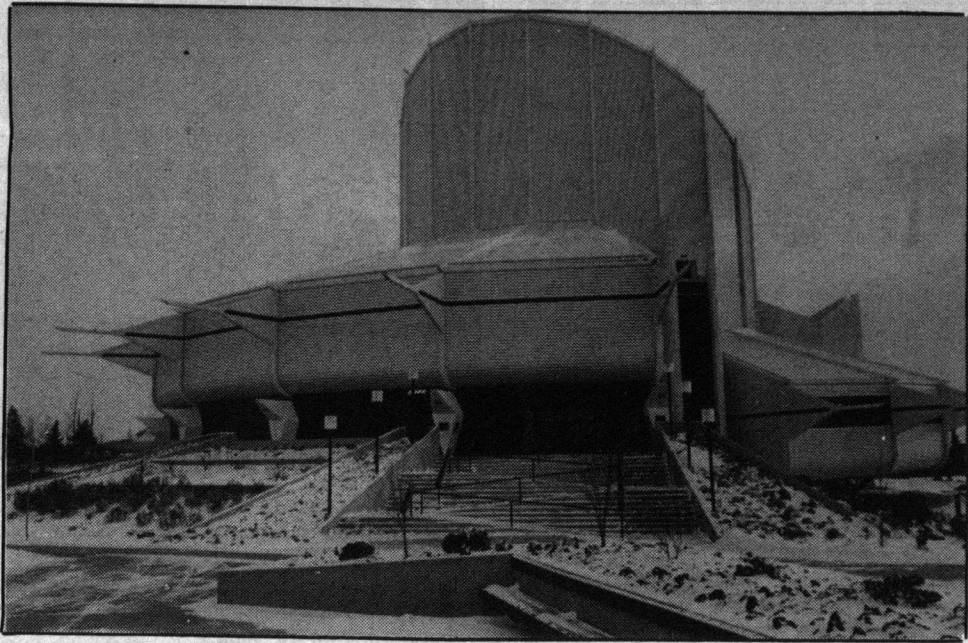


photo Rob Schmidt

the whole Centre. It is a million dollar special effect that can simulate the movement of the night sky due to its multiple axis. This machine projects the stars.

The animated figures and flashes are results of projection, like all the other effects.

In this case, the choice of music is well suited to the medium. The show consists

predominantly of two Pink Floyd albums, "The Wall" and "Dark Side of the Moon". Spacey music for a space show.

Pink Floyd Skylights is a co-production of Roundhouse Productions of Vancouver and the Edmonton Space Sciences Centre.

Generally speaking, the Edmonton Space Sciences Centre staff produce all their own feature shows. The movies and laser shows may come from elsewhere.

Technical effects and models are all made on the premises in the studios behind the scenes. Some of the equipment includes such simple things as saws and drills for building models to the most complex of computer equipment to put the show together.

Planning the visual show is done on a story board with a multiple of slides, much like planning a film. A script is written and from it a musical score is composed.

The Centre has its own recording studio and composer, Donovan Reimer. In the studio, the soundtrack is built in layers with a synthesizer. Instruments are added until the sound is just right. These are real instrument sounds, not electronic imitations. (This machine has also been used to reinforce the string section of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, says its owner, the composer.)

The others on the Edmonton Space Sciences Centre production team are: executive producer, John Hault; writer/director, Alan Dyer; narrators, Elan Ross Gibson and James Forsythe; graphic artist, Sharon Marie Dunnigan; photographers, Gary Bind and Wynne Palmer; and special effects, Larry Rex, Dave Bruner, Stewart Krysko, Michale Mott and Alex Sokolowski.

If you plan to see one laser show this year, see *Pink Floyd Skylights*, it will leave you in awe.

Boyd's music takes on new depth

Liona Boyd SUB Theatre November 7

review by Gunnar Lindabury

Wow. What a difference four years and a talented backup band (not to mention a hairstyle and a new wardrobe) make for the "first lady of classical guitar".

The band is good. I mean really good. They effectively bridge the gap between Boyd's Spanish-baroque style and contemporary rhythms. In fact, with the band behind her, Boyd's music takes on a depth and power unhinted at in previous performances.

A lot of the new repertoire verges on a modern funk-pop beat; sometimes it actually seems to approach a Flashdance-style production. Chimes and synthesizer join with a polished and integrated percussion suggestive of commercial recordings.

The change is a gamble, but it's a deliberate one. Boyd is moving with the times, explains drummer Steve (give this man a

solo) Mitchell. "She's just trying to diversify," he says.

Indeed, that is what she has done. Boyd still plays her classics: Albinoni, Bach, Rodrigo, and other Spanish composers. But other influences appear from a variety of sources. Here, her style synthesizes a Gagnon pop with the flavor of Zamfir's South American pan pipes; there, a guitar hints at the madness of Hendrix, recalls the melodies of the Beatles or the swing of the 20's; and there, again, is Vangelis.

At times the only thing holding this music from mainstream pop is the individual talent of Boyd's musicians. Mitchell is, well, "fabulous", providing a spirited, if restrained, rhythm. Edmonton native and band leader Rick Tait teams up with Anthony Panacci to show that two strong keyboardists are second to none in creating surreal melodic atmospheres or making oceans break in thunderous waves behind the dancing of Boyd's guitar. Finally, Richard Foltin, the base guitarist, has a touch for composing and performing that

must be experienced.

Boyd was a bit skeptical about touring with a band, explains Mitchell. It was in many ways another gamble; aside from recent studio recordings, group work is something she hasn't done. "But within a month, she was one of the boys," says Mitchell.

And it shows. This is not the diminutive solitary woman in white lace, almost overwhelmed by the Jubilee stage in November of 1982. Boyd seems more relaxed and confident; her body swings with her band's music; she has stage presence now. And she admits herself that SUB is a cozier space.

Her music, too, has changed. Baroque-simo, "baroque with a difference", in the first set is one of the most frustratingly pleasant pieces I've heard her play. She's arranged a medley of passages from a number of baroque composers, all tantalizingly familiar, yet gone before you can decide whether it's Corelli or Telemann. She lets us sample, taste, be awakened, but

not fulfilled.

Yet for all this, her style still reflects her strong Spanish-baroque discipline. When she plays unaccompanied, Boyd is that solitary musician concentrating on loving her instrument intimately. Still, there is her musical dexterity, the capacity to evoke a vibrato with her right hand while teasing a melody from the frets, or to strike her guitar like a drum and draw forth chords with each beat. She speaks briefly and quietly between numbers, letting her music express her eloquence. Unlike other performers, Boyd does not project herself on us; rather she draws us into her world of intricate Spanish folk songs and courtly renaissance dances.

Writer-in-Residence

Ray Smith in his first public reading of the year Thursday Nov. 13th
12:30 noon
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