



ENTERTAINMENT

Steel Magnolias kicks off new TNB season



Some of the stars of *Steel Magnolias*: (from left to right) Irene Pauzer, Linda Prystawska and Jenny Murday

by Cynthia Kirkby
Brunswickan Entertainment

Steel Magnolias is a play about six strangely named women who talk about their lives at a weekly beauty shop ritual. Necessarily, plays cannot have flashy action or changes of scenery, but *Steel Magnolias* doesn't even have much of a story (besides the ones the characters tell each other as they interact). When a play relies so heavily on dialogue, the personalities on stage need to be incredibly charismatic. Some of them are.

I instantly disliked the first character, Truvy (Wanda Cannon), the owner of the beauty shop in which *Steel Magnolias* is set. Her accent is irritating, her expressions (facial and colloquial) obnoxious, her clothes and makeup gaudy. If the director's intent was to annoy his audience, he succeeded. (In my opinion, anyway.) Truvy was my sister's favourite character.

Slightly less annoying was Clairee, played by Irene Pauzer. At times she was less than convincing (especially as a football fanatic), but she redeemed herself with her excellent aristocratic, dispassionately amused facial expressions.

I was delighted, however, with Ouiser (Denise Fergusson), a wonderfully witty, cynical, dejected eccentric with perfectly poor posture. She has the best lines in the play, and she delivers them convincingly.

Equally enchanting is Shelby (Sarah Evans), the new bride and mother. She is the most dynamic character, in personality, life, and hairstyles. She is very personable, and seemed genuinely amused by the quips. This could just be because it was the first performance, and she wasn't yet sick of the play, or it could be that she's a good actress. Either way, I liked her.

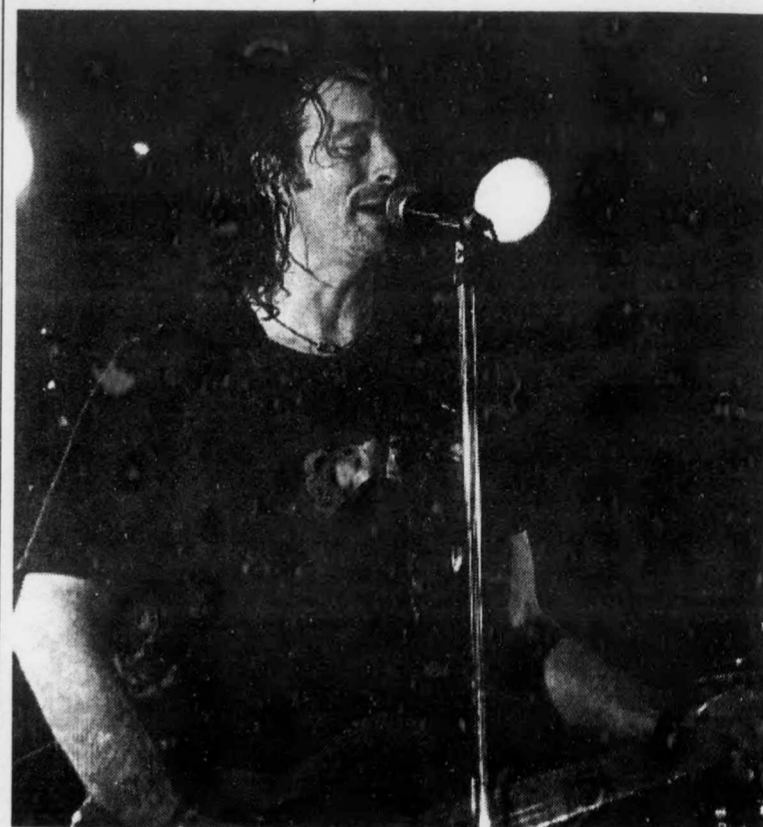
My favourite character was Annelle, played by Linda Prystawska. She, too, goes through many life

changes, from the awkwardly graceful new girl in town to the comfortable awkward pregnant wife. Although she is less central than Shelby, she is more noticeable. She has a fascinating face, and a good range of expressions; Annelle is alternately nervous, apologetic, childishly pleased, and, when she becomes devout, sinfully delighted.

The only character who failed to produce some kind of strong response from me was M'Lynn, played by Jenny Munday. Assuming that I remember correctly, her role in *Steel Magnolias* is very similar to her role in *If We Are Women*; her unimpressive emotional outburst gave me a feeling of *deja-vu*. She isn't bad, just bland.

Honestly, I enjoyed the play. The interesting characters carried most of the play, and when they didn't, I just amused myself by examining the intricacies of the set. I'd recommend seeing it, but only to patient types who enjoy subtleties and sentiments.

Meanwhile, in Saint John...



Barney Bentall struts his stuff down at The Avenue

Photo by Peter J. Cullen

by Peter J. Cullen
Brunswickan Entertainment

Before the lights came on and even before anyone had taken the stage the crowd was already standing, cheering and applauding as if they had just experienced one of the best live acts to ever roll through Saint John. The ensuing hour-and-a-half proved that to be just the case. Touring in support of his latest album, *Gin Palace*, Barney Bentall and his revamped band whipped the 450-plus audience at The Avenue into an ecstatic, exhilarated horde on Sunday night.

Wielding a brilliant new 13-track CD, and armed with a musical set list to turn most bands green with envy, Bentall dazzled the crowd with the songs that have made him such a popular mainstay on the Canadian music scene since his debut album in 1988. However, three years have passed between records for Bentall, and two years have unfolded since his last appearance in Saint John. Several reasons were responsible for the hiatus. "Well, there was a three year space between the two records (*Ain't Life Strange* and *Gin Palace*) ... [because] we just decided to take our time to get the songs right," Bentall said in an interview. "We wanted to really wait until we had what we felt was needed before we went into the studio, which is not always the case with rock n' roll. Sometimes you're working with deadlines or there's pressure from the record company ... [but] we're really happy with this one. We really are."

In comparison with its predecessors *Gin Palace* strays from the band's familiar manner, delving into a harsher-sounding guitar style and somewhat darker, more intriguing lyrics. Bentall acknowledges the many changes on the new album: "There are several reasons for it," he stated. "One is that our keyboard player (Camden Bowman) left to go back to university, and I think that had an influence on the sound. Suddenly we were basically a guitar band, plain and simple ... But we really enjoyed that direction, and we wanted to steer the record in that kind of direction." Perhaps one of the largest modifications is the condensation of the band's 'Barney Bentall & the Legendary Hearts' name to simply 'Barney Bentall'. That was due primarily to the reconfiguration of the group. "Colin [Nairne, guitarist] and Jack [Guppy, percussionist] have been together since the beginning. But there's two new guys and there's been changes - Camden left - and we just felt that that was another time [of our lives]," Bentall stated. The two new additions he refers to are guitarist Mike Crozier and bassist Dave Reimer.

Although Bentall, a resident of Vancouver, remains pleased with the collaborative efforts of *Gin Palace*, he expresses a firm desire to achieve recognition and popularity outside of his national domain. "You wish things would grow in an exponential fashion. It always seems it's taking a

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...Events Diary...Events Diary...Events Diary...

Get your calendars out, and make a note of these upcoming events that get the official *Brunswickan* Seal of approval...

Sammy, the official *Brunswickan* Seal of approval



Friday 13th October - Cub, Pluto, Hayden, Pansy Division and the Monoxides at the Farmers Market, starting at 6.30 pm. Tickets \$8 in advance or \$10 at the door.

Saturday 21st October - SNFU at the Pyramid Warehouse. Tickets are \$8 in advance or \$10 at the door.

Saturday 21st October - Moxy Fruvous at the Dock. Tickets are \$7 in advance.

Tuesday 31st October - Junkhouse at the Dock. Tickets are \$6 in advance.

Saturday 11th November - *The Pursuit of Happiness* at the Dock. Tickets are so cheap you won't even know that you are paying for them.