

# Big Medicine at SUB Theatre

If you happened to miss the line-up for Dr. Bundolo's Pandemonium Medicine Show, then chances are you also missed one of the zaniest, slap-happiest comedy shows being produced in Canada today. The sounds of Sopwith Camels tearing up the sky; torrents of abdominal manifestations making themselves heard; grunts and groans; these were just some of the sound effects heard throughout the performance.

Around 700 Edmontonians were crowded into SUB theatre Tuesday night for a live broadcast of Dr. Bundolo's show. The show was taped and will be aired over CBC radio some time in the near future. As most of you know, this was part of the CBC Campus Caper, which is not only providing publicity for CBC but is also synthesizing cultural activities within the university.

Dr. Bundolo and troupe travel approximately eight months of the year giving shows across Canada. They had just come from Saskatoon and Calgary before reaching us. The production is based in Vancouver where the cast all have other jobs. Norm Grohman, for instance, holds a post on CTV in Vancouver as a weather forecaster. Now I can tell why it is that we are besieged with such zany weather.

Actually, Norm's performance in the show was excellent and kept a lively level of entertainment flowing. Besides being afflicted with a neurotic case of highly contagious hemoglypepsia (for those of you not familiar with the disease, these are acute symptoms of gut-rending beiches, mind-blowing sneezes, posterior exhalations - which at one point threatened to propel

him off the stage and into the laps of the audience - and malicious body odour), Mr. Grohman exercised a keen ability in smoothing over any rough spots which invariably crop up in live radio broadcasts.

Bill Reiter, voluptuous in his alias as 'Rocky Vasalino' and moronic as the sidekick of 'Netherhead' (Norm Grohman again) of The West', sometimes tangoed sardonically with the audience. But listening to Rocky's revelations of strip parlours or encountering his enthusiasm in bisexuality, one has to admire the stamina that must accompany a stage performer and which Mr. Reiter exuded.

And one cannot forget the undulating form of Donna Christie as the girl at the basketball game whose mind was not solely on the game at hand. Mainly, the male characters needed a balancing component, and Ms. Christie had enough

gusto and vivaciousness to tip the scales. She seemed to be very aware at all times of the show's stimulus on us and of its response level, always trying to reach that equilibrium where the audience is satisfied.

There were points in the show which could be picked out and dissected analytically, but I am sure that writers Jeff Groberman and Dan Thatchcup, along with producer Don Kowalchuk, will be doing this themselves. There were a few puns that fell flat, granted. And a few interruptions in the skits caused some fidgeting amongst the viewers. But, these actors only have a couple of days in which to prepare and brush-up for the live performance. And a lot of times, spontaneity plays an important role. Each performance has the possibility of being visually interpreted in a different sense as well as read in another manner.

Of course, these are most likely the places where support from a good band is essential. As

was noticed, trumpeter D. Clarke (Dr. Bundolo himself) along with the Tommy Bar Orchestra, filled the gaps with measured precision that can be found in any exceptional band. I myself felt that the music was well worth the show and was pleased with the overall effect. But with Big Miller and Nat Nash as interludes, there can be no doubting the finesse with which the show pulled off.

I am sorry to have had to leave the "straight guy" to the last and I hope that Bill Buck ('Behind the Suck With Bill Buck') won't mind. I just had to get a few things out of the way first. This witty character probably isn't the material that counts but what you make of it. Although sometimes in the shadow of 'Rocky Vasalino' and 'Netherhead', Bill Buck came through as a Rowan and Martin type newscaster.

As they said at the end of the performance, I do hope that they can make it back for a second and even third time.

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## An insider's view — continued from p. 7

networks do NOT produce programming. They rent their facilities out and buy completed programs from production firms. If NBC had to produce all of their own programs they would go broke. They simply air them. They are the middle man, selling their time to sponsors.

The CBC, in contrast, has to produce 80% of its programming schedule. This is incredibly costly. The few Canadian com-

panies now producing television programs are very lean operations that hire staff for the duration of production only. *The Newcomers* being seen this fall on our network is a buy from the company that produced the series for Imperial Oil. We desperately need more of this kind of work here.

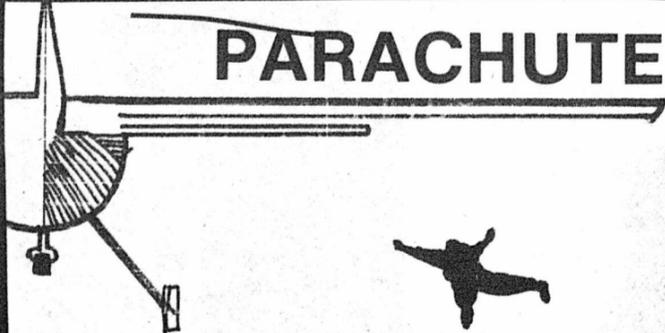
There are those who say that we simply don't have the volume of work here to keep all our good

people and I tend to believe that. There are also those who say that we could produce the work for them and to an extent I think that is true. Maggie Smith has been getting about six major roles a year at Stratford for three years now without a word about Canadian nationalism. But that's a different union and the Stratford Festival is self-supporting. So it depends a lot on the union and who you are - Maggie Smith has certainly "paid her dues" in the process of developing herself.

By the way, *King of Kensington* is doing very well in Los Angeles and we do sell thousands of hours of programming a year around the world. The one point that a lot of people tend to ignore, except the politicians, is that CBC's weekly audience share has been declining steadily for the last ten years or so. We are now down about 10 per cent and we probably get about 8 per cent next year. The more stations (CRTC & Canadian Radio and Tele-communications Commission) licences to compete with the CBC, the fewer people we reach. CTV makes little contribution to developing Canadian talent despite promises to do so. Global and ITV make none. They are networks thriving on imported shows but the CRTC keeps the going. Cable T.V. is simply another for American T.V.

So you see, the government has constantly made the CBC's job of fulfilling its original mandate progressively more difficult by making it easier and easier for Canadians to watch American television. The fact that Canadian WANTS to watch American television and do so at an alarming rate. This is an important cultural question. Read Sue Crean's book, *What's Afraid of Canadian Culture?* for a complete treatment. For now it is accurate enough to say that the entertainment industry in Canada, of which the CBC is a part, has lost the battle for the hearts and minds of Canadian. What is the CBC's share of the blame for this loss? Does it matter?

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