

Red and Black is back...again and again and again

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Anne Murray makes an appearance at Red 'n Black '65.

By DERWIN GOWAN

Red 'n Black Revue, an indigenous product of UNB, began when the class of 1948 needed something exciting to celebrate their senior year, so a few of them

'n Black was back. The opener was "Second Last Chance" and they finished off with "Club '49". The kickline, or chorus line as it was known then, was the "best east of Montreal."

Red 'n Black ran into trouble in



The '68 kickline.

got together, and the annual revue began.

This was in the post war era when money was scarce and they could not afford a full scale bash.

In any event, the show sold out, and its run had to be extended for three nights instead of two.

Way back then, "The Greatest Show in Eastern Canada" was held in March at the Teachers College Auditorium. This building is still standing downtown. It was part of Fredericton High School, and is now in the process of being converted into a Justice Department building.

The show-stopping kickline made their first appearance then, those "erotic co-eds in chorus costumes." To quote The Brunswickan of the day, "a tradition has been started which deserves to be carried on from class to class." Sure enough, in March 1949, Red

1950 when the Master of Ceremonies threatened to quit: He said he would only stay on as long as there was a greater student turnout. He was not disappointed, however, and "The Greatest Show in Eastern Canada" cleared \$1700. The M.C. that year was Gerry Bell.

Betty Riordon was chorus line trainer, and "the men glued their eyes to the chorus line and the women glued their eyes to their men, a very satisfactory arrangement." Swivel Hips Manzer and the Rockettes were also big attractions.

The tradition had, by this time, become so firmly established that the Senior Class President was to be the producer of Red 'n Black. The proceeds were used by the senior class.

"Life at UNB since 1930" was the theme of the 1951 revue. As could be expected, "The ever awed and

leggy girls chorus line is showing more and finer form this year."

They were told by the show's director at one rehearsal to "shake it but don't break it."

This was also the first year of the boys kickline.

The theme of the 1952 revue was "A student's vacation".

More tradition seems to have been established around this time. The acts were rehearsed separately, and there was a last minute effort to put the whole thing together. Also, the M.C. is reported to have made "rude jokes" between acts. However, this did not seem to do the performance any damage, as, "All those who contributed in any way towards the show can be proud of a show well done...Special thanks are given to the person who unknowingly loaned his dog for the last night's performance...Rounding out the show was the party. Although the audience couldn't appreciate it, we're sure the cast did."

Moving on to 1953, the show was in trouble again. As was the case a couple of years back, they were short of personnel. However, they pulled through. They recruited all the latent talent from all years and faculties that abounded the university. A freshman Forester was recruited for M.C. "Anything can happen with a freshman Forester in charge of Red 'n Black."

There were changes made in 1954. The first half of the show was done as a vaudeville act with placard bearing announcers and the second half of the show was run like a variety show. The kickline was going strong, and this was the first time the now traditional poster with the silhouette of the kickline appeared.

Foresters were the butt of the jokes in 1955 with the Foresters' Ballet and the Foresters' Mirage in Backwoods New Brunswick. A canteen at the back of the auditorium was conducted for the first time that year.

The 1954 Red 'n Black came off smoothly, selling out way ahead of time. "In keeping with the UNB tradition, it is bigger and better," so says The Brunswickan of the day. What more need we say?

The tenth anniversary was celebrated in 1957. It was acclaimed "The best Red 'n Black in ten years." Also, "The Red 'n Black is an amateur revue, it suffers from many of the faults of amateurism, but at the same time it conquers many others. And it succeeds in its main aim, that of entertainment."

The revue of March, 1958 occasioned the official change from chorus line to kickline. However, it was still the "best chorus line east of Montreal." The jokes were "of a different variety and calibre."

Another new format was badly needed in the 1958-59 academic year. For one thing, the date of the revue changed from March to November, as there was too much conflict with exams, winter carnival, and other similar activities. This means that there were two Red 'n Blacks '58, or else Red 'n Black '59 was held in 1958. "The two numbers of the chorus line were well presented, and the use of fluorescent stockings in the second routine was a novel twist. However, I didn't feel that their first number was enhanced by having the defensive line of the Red Bombers in it." Change in format indeed!

Red 'n Black '59 went smoothly, although it cost Chris Robin, a second year Arts student, a trip to the hospital. To publicize the show, he tried to walk a tightrope from LBR to the engineering building. Suffice it to say that he did not make it.

The revue heralding the 1960's was, as seems to be usual, reported to be the best ever. As it was said at the time, "The annual UNB show is a unique form of comedy."

The 1961 revue followed suit pretty much the same as others. The Brunswickan conducted a survey that year, asking, "Why is Red 'n Black funny?" The answers are as follows: "Because it's vulgar and immoral, therefore I'll be in the front row opening night."

"Funny because the person sitting on your left won't be around next year."

"I think it's great fun for the performers, but I don't think the audience finds it very funny."

"Why do people laugh at Red Skelton?"

"Funny because the money goes to the senior class."

"Is it funny?" so said about 90 per cent of those interviewed.

They ran into trouble in 1962. Three weeks before the show was to come off, they were still in the preliminary organizational stages.

A special edition of The Brunswickan saved the day, however. "This would never happen at Mount A" must have been the clincher. The Brunswickan reviewer seems to have been unwarrantedly harsh, saying, "Those lovely legs certainly deserved a better showing." But,

as the issue of The Bruns following the special edition said in big black letters, "Red 'n Black is on".

Red 'n Black 1963 seems to have avoided the troubles of the previous year and came off quite smoothly. The traditional "Ear of Corn" was handed out to the person deemed to have done the most for the show, and Helen and Sheila Roberts wowed them all with their kickline.

The Red 'n Black of 1964 marked the move from Teachers College to the Playhouse. This was to be the "new sophisticated Red 'n Black." However, all was not lost, as is faithfully recorded by the Brunswickan scribe of the day, "Good news-boys, the kickline has been doubled in size and tripled in sex appeal." Ann Murray made her first solo appearance in the revue that year.

Running smoothly 1965 with the kickline kicking, singers singing, jokers joking, and skitsters doing whatever it is skitsters do went over with a bang. One minor complaint was uttered though: "I would rather Lail MacKeigan had, not dressed as a French Canadian lumberjack, but her act was funny."

There were few problems with Red 'n Black 1966. The kickline was there, and gogo girls were an added attraction. It was "The best in years", as the cliché goes. Another added feature was the hundreds of balloons that dropped from the curtain as the show was ending on the third and final showing.

The Revue of 1967, heralding centennial year, had a "bigger and better kickline,"... "composed of 24 young bellies." Sheila Roberts was an old hand at making bigger and better kicklines by this time. According to The Bruns Review, "The 21st annual Red 'n Black Revue can be best described as a typical college production, emphasizing the typical college preoccupation with sex and booze."

With respect to "Red 'n Black '68 (it) was decidedly amateur but decidedly successful." They seem to have begun to realize that Red 'n Black just does not fit the professional stereotype, or any other stereotype for that matter.

The Red 'n Black saying good bye to the revolutionary decade also said hello to the much famed jug band. As could be expected, "The kickline was more coordinated than ever." 'Co-ordinated' may seem a little high-fluted, but it really means (you guessed it) "bigger and better".



The kickline of '63.

Photo by Steve Patriquin

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