

Red n'Black stays amateur but students still love it

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It appears that Messrs. Chipman and MacDonald couldn't come up with the extra ingredient necessary for the 'professional tone' they had hoped would retune the three and a half string harpsichord that constitutes the Red 'N' Black programme. For the past three or four years the revue hasn't been able to get away from the Lower Jemseg W.A. Variety Show atmosphere but every year the local student community comes back for more. They love it and the more legs in the kickline the better.

Red 'N' Black provided a valuable service to the houses on the hill. It's the one social activity in the fall term that assures the resident Cyrano's of a date and underprivileged voyeurs of a gay night on the town. Steve Crawford, the most talented performer ever to park his bench on the Red 'N' Black stage, was the single prophet of the directors' cry of 'professionalism'. He speaks 88 languages equally well and conveys more emotion in one bar than ten Neil MacGill's at the River Room. Peter Chipman's fine baritone has yet to make itself tiresome, and his combination with Crawford was well received. The Wade Brothers promised to sing only one country and western tune. They sang it, were called back by the audience, and promptly sang another one. Their 'new sound' isn't much better than their old, although I must give them credit for their interpretation of "Abraham, Martin, and John", a song about Lincoln, Kings, and Kennedy which questions the values of a society which would permit their assassination.



Peggy and Ann put together harmony, blond-and-brunette style, to serve up original renditions of Lightfoot songs.

The Dangling Conversation Piece was back. Their semi-satirical "Teenage Mother" was so well done that one thinks they may have started singing ten years too late. Peter Blair did an excellent job on "Bonny and Clyde", aided by Peter MacDonald's drum solo, but their last number did little to strengthen their performance.

The three sets of folk singers were entertaining, pretty, competent, pretty, appreciated, but decidedly amateur. They didn't claim to be anything else though and the audience enjoyed their interesting and individualist styles. Vocalist Paul Campbell, with his autoharp, did something no one has done before and if we can judge from audience reception, he did it well.

The "Zoom 60 Zone", led by Bob Bonnell, and Dave Ward were about as exciting as Colin MacKay at a teach-in. Unfortunately they were characteristic of the first half of the programme. Which brings us to Flo, of the Co-ed club, who managed to steal the first half as well as the millionaire's jewels.

The dance routines were too numerous and too short. The lighting and background scenery were well done but just as the audience had focused their collective eye and adjusted to the rhythm the curtains were drawn. Barb Patterson's "Barbie Dolls" were probably the most competent, but at times their timing and coordination wasn't all it could have been.

"Robin Hood and his merrie men" got a laugh but so do elephant and grape jokes. The gay hand was moderately funny, moderately crude, and moderately well received. The jester at least when I saw him on Friday night seemed to be especially well cast for his stiff role.

Probably the biggest disappointment of the evening was the "Laugh-in" style discotheque scene. There were a number of good lines but due to ineffective lighting and poor timing they didn't come off. The Laugh-in scene required a totally dark stage with quick spotlight flashes to the parts of the stage where the lines were being delivered. The stage was not dark enough and the attention of the audience was diverted by the between-scene movements on the right side. To be effective, the act required a good deal of practice especially by the backstage technicians. It was evident through a couple of very obvious blunders that they didn't have the necessary practice and it was only lines like "The Pope plays in the rhythm band" that saved it from total disaster.

Red 'N' Black '68 was decidedly amateur but decidedly successful. The Playhouse was sold out all three nights and the audiences hugely enjoyed the programme, notably the performances of Steve Crawford, the DCP, and, believe it or not, the Wade brothers. This is the kind of Red 'N' Black UNB likes and this is the kind we're likely to get in years to come.



Barbara Patterson's "Barbie Dolls", although slightly amateurish and at times uncoordinated in their performance, were received enthusiastically.

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The Dangling Conversation Piece was back for another year at Red 'n Black. The folk-rock group put on one of the best performances in the revue, with songs like "Bonnie and Clyde," and a satire on old rock, "Teenage Mother."