

Yuks are funny-sometimes



All together now: I pledge allegiance to inanity, weirdness, Peter Lougheed, and the exalted state of hysteria.

Honk if You Love Alberta
or
Leave it to Peter
Second City Famous Comedy Revue
The Steakloft

review by Wes Oginski
"Downstairs at the Steakloft"

describes just how wacky this group can get. Unfortunately, the Second City Revue players also seem to be trying out for the *Edmonton Trappers* — the show is full of hits and strikeouts.

Second City has been in Edmonton for a year now, and this is their fourth show. This one is perhaps the best to date.

Honk if You Love Alberta contains much more western Canadian content than any of their previous shows, and more indigenous to the Edmonton area. This has been a major criticism of the group to date.

The bulk of the show consists of a number of prepared skits. Michael Gellman, the director, is the only professional from the original Second City in Chicago. The other members include four University of Alberta Drama Department compatriots: Bob Bainborough; Sandra Balcovske; Lorraine Behnan; and David Mann. The fifth performer is Sparky Johnson, of Vancouver.

The evening starts with a miss. First the troupe presents a "Busby Berkley" musical revue type opening, then a skit centered around a modern couple in Garneau. When the husband comes home, he growls about a bad day at work, and the wife promises to fix everything with a hash brownie. The humor in this skit is supposed to come from the corruption of their leftist values. It does not work, especially when all the problems are met with the wife's reply, "How about a hash brownie?"

Next follows a series of short skits. These contain most of the high-points of the evening. It was hilarious to watch a prostitute make a pick-up in Inuvik. She asks the stranger if he wants company for the evening at the reasonable cost of \$10. The next thing you know, the customer climaxes after rubbing noses.

This pretty well describes the first half of the show. The short quick skits were the funniest, while the longer skits appeared to try and drag out a single gag for a few minutes.

It is worthwhile to see the first half just for the quickies. Who can but help giggle helplessly as one of the performers

appears to be writing a typical smutty novel. He includes lurid details about fingering and caressing and finally concludes, "I then completed my strip search."

After the intermission the longer skits become comparable in quality to the quickies.

Again the short sketches are hilarious. It is even possible that their sketches are more true-to-life than we can imagine. Second City conjures up an image of an auction, where a representative of Petro-Canada bids against himself to purchase Petro-Fina.

"Alice in Council-land" is the troupe's finale, and the best long skit of the evening. This is a retelling of the Carroll classic, with: Alice being played by an unknown woman from Rosedale; Cec Purves as the White Rabbit; Ed Leger as the March Hare; Olivia Butti as the Loud Mouse; and Ron Hayter as the Mad Hater(sic).

Second City Famous Comedy Revue does not finish here. After the main show, the cast comes on stage to ask the audience for suggestions for improvisations.

It is fun to watch these performers take a suggestion to improvise, say, a salesperson in a "love shop" and bring it hilariously to life a few minutes later.

Then we sit back and see Joe Clark try to spice up his marriage.

"I can do anything that other French guy and his wife, no longer living with him, can."

The improvisations happen only Monday through Thursday. The main show continues Friday and Saturday.

It is nice to see a good locally produced performance. Improvements are needed, especially for the main body of the show, but it seems that Second City may yet find a home in Edmonton.

aboutroundaboutround

by Michael Skeet

Nothing but pop music this week, kiddies, and what's wrong with that? Sometimes you have a craving for nothing more than entertainment; consciousness-raising can wait another week.

Smokey Robinson
Being With You
(Tamla T-375)

The onslaught of disco in the mid-70s left a lot of R & B and soul acts without musical legs to stand on. A very few, like the Temptations, held their own. Some went with the flow. A lot sank without a trace.

The predominantly-white record

buying public in Canada paid little notice. Instead of *Soul Man* or *What Does It Take (To Win Your Love for Me?)* we got crossover hits like *Rocking Chair*. Instead of the Righteous Brothers singing *You've Lost That Loving Feeling* we had the Bee Gees and *Stayin' Alive*.

Fortunately, pop R & B never really died, and now it's emerging from a too-long hibernation, helped by a good kick from Michael Jackson. Some of the old artists (like Wilson Pickett) are starting to record again. John Belushi made *Soul Man* a hit again. And Smokey's back.

William 'Smokey' Robinson penned some of the best R & B songs of the 60s and Smokey Robinson and the Miracles had a string of hits throughout most of

the decade. Robinson split from the Miracles in the early 70s, though, and spent the better part of that decade in the doldrums. Now, though, he's back with a vengeance.

"People can change/They always do," sings Robinson in *Being With You*, the title track of his latest album, and he might well be describing his own comeback. This is Robinson's third LP in the last year and a half, and while it's not his best, it contains fine examples of the reasons for his new success.

Robinson hasn't lost his songwriting skills: the best tunes on this record are his (the title track and *Food for Thought* being my personal favorites). Side 1, therefore, with three Robinson tunes, is the better, while Side 2, with only one, should be played seldom if at all.

Of the non-Robinson songs, *Can't Fight Love* is the most notable, if only because it carries the homage to Michael Jackson to ridiculous extremes (it sounds almost exactly like *Don't Stop Till You Get Enough* from a few years ago). And while someone might be able to make something of *I Hear The Children Singing* (Wayne Newton, perhaps), coming from Robinson it sounds even more like sentimental kitschy rubbish than it really is.

Having Smokey Robinson back is terrific. Now if we could get him to do an

Juice Newton
Juice
(Capitol ST12136)

Despite an extensive (but not very thick) Country and Western veneer, this is still a pop album. See, for example, such countrified pop tunes as Bourdreaux Bryant's *All I Have To Do Is Dream* and Elton John-Bernie Taupin's *Country Comfort*. See also the first (and my favorite) song on the album: an incredibly faithful (almost note for note, in fact) copy of Chip Taylor's *Angel of the Morning* as originally done by Merilee Rush.

Newton carves herself a comfortable little niche in the pop-country vocalist

category, somewhere between Jennifer Warnes and Linda Ronstadt (except on an unfortunate version of Paul Davis' *Ride 'Em Cowboy*, where she sounds like Cher during her *Half-Breed* phase). Maybe it's simply because she's fresh, something relatively new on the scene, but I find her easier to listen to than most of the vocalists in that extensive category.



One thing *Juice* has going for it is production. Neither the shimmering, overblown ostentation of Nicolette Larson's *Radioland* or the plastic punker-than-thou of Ronstadt's *Mad Love*, *Juice* is clean simplicity, thanks to Richard Landis. The cause of simplicity is aided by sparse, but effective, instrumentation.

Juice is a nice comfortable album that oughta go down real well out here in the semi-wild West. For me, it's something diverting to listen to until Rickie Lee Jones finally releases her second LP.

NEXT WEEK: Ping-pong diplomacy runs riot as the Cheshire Cat plays the China Card and the rest of the Happy Gang tries to cope with a summer without rubber walls in *Giant Foul-Smelling Invaders From Outer Space Do Rude Things To Rutabagas and Maybe Win a Genie or Two if We Can Get Jack-Lemmon to Take a Part and 40 per cent of the Gross*. Whew!



The Las Vegas Variety Revue was in SUB last Saturday to Monday, as readers of the small print in the Theatre calendar already know. But for the performers the big attraction was...