

***Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica* – reviews**

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Erotic hockey tales score on stage
Stephen Hunt, Calgary Herald
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Even on a night when the home team is in town, the Martha Cohen Theatre is jumping.

It's opening night of *Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica*, a promising brew of hockey, sex and rock and roll starring One Yellow Rabbit and the Rheostatics, so what's not to like?

There's Bruce McCullough, film director, comedy icon, a Calgary cultural institution all by himself, slipping into town from LA, no doubt to pay respects to One Yellow Rabbit. The local experimentalists par excellence -- having spent the better parts of 25 years watching 19,000 a night traipse down to the Saddledome to watch their heroes -- have met hockey halfway in a kind of cultural chinook, deigning to suck in their (reasonably trim) guts, and don gear in an attempt to locate the poetry and sensuality in our national pastime.

The Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica is a little bit of locker-room jock talk, a little bit of tone poetry, some dance sequences, Denise Clarke dressed up like a goalie wearing a glowing orange jockstrap reciting an ode to her Five Hole -- in short, a typical Rabbits evening on the boards.

The difference tonight is the presence of the plaid-clad, fedora-wearing Rheostatics, who are Canadian icons themselves.

The Rheos are led by Dave Bidini, who wrote the stories the Rabbits perform between each Rheostatics song he plays. Is this guy a multi-tasker or what?

It's fun to see to hockey get the mainstage treatment at the Martha Cohen, and when the actors say some of those names, like Beliveau, Gumper and even Jamie Macoun (whom I'll never forgive for crosschecking Dale Hawerchuk and the Jets out of the NHL playoffs 20 years ago. If I see Jamie Macoun on the street, I'll fight him), *The Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica* feels like, yeah, hockey!

You see, hockey players are our rock stars, our movie stars, our Bollywood and *Grand Ole Opry*, and our La Scala all rolled into one. It makes perfect sense to tell hockey stories in a theatre.

Somehow though, the thing that hockey does so well -- the energy, the speed, the beauty -- gets a little misplaced on the thrust stage.

It comes in fits and starts, in the unlikeliest of places. When Andy Curtis folds his hockey jersey before throwing it to the ground. When goalie Clarke shimmies off stage lit up like a Christmas tree, or when Michael Green channels a Toronto Maple Leaf named Eddie Burns who falls in love with a Chicago barroom groupie and defends her tarnished honour on the ice in 1948, *The Five Hole* reverberates like a well-thrown bodycheck.

The thing about throwing together a tasty brew is that sometimes you can't simply lob an ingredient into the pot and have it all come together effortlessly.

In *The Five Hole*, too many of these tales force feed us our erotica, which doesn't feel too erotic at all.

For all their sexcapades on the road, their groupies and conquests and dirty talk, hockey players, more than anything, are overgrown boys who get overpaid never to grow up. Peter Pan and the Lost Boys didn't have to fly all the way to Neverland to remain children forever; all they had to do was turn pro.

Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica

Written by Dave Bidini, with One Yellow Rabbit and The Rheostatics.

Jan 4-6, Martha Cohen Theatre, EPCOR Centre

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'Hockey Erotica' raunchy fun

By LOUIS B. HOBSON -- Calgary Sun

CALGARY - One Yellow Rabbit's *Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica* purports to zero in on two of Canada's favourite pastimes.

According to playwright David Bidini, that would be hockey and sex or, more specifically, sex in hockey.

In the opening skit entitled "Joan," a pair of hockey players (Michael Green and Andy Curtis) obsess about the new female goalie on their team.

It's raunchy fun as Green's character details his use of pornography to sublimate his actual desire to have sex with [his] curvaceous teammate.

"Joan" was a good skit to kick off the play because it warns the audience just how graphic the language and images in *Five Hole* are going to be.

Denise Clarke takes centre stage next as the female goalie peppering her monologue with sexual innuendo as electrifying as her neon costume.

The *Five Hole* is pure Rabbit in that it is so wonderfully theatrical.

Clarke, who is also the show's choreographer, and director Blake Brooker know how to make a stage come alive and this is *Five Hole*'s secret.

It uses so many different and exciting theatrical conventions, the audience is mesmerized as much by the visuals as the dialogue.

“Why I Love Wayne Bradley” shows the frustration of a closeted gay player (Curtis) who is smitten with Bradley, a Wayne Gretzky-like hockey idol.

To their credits, Bidini and Curtis make this skit both tragic and funny and a true metaphor for the kind of male bonding that is not supposed to happen in sports.

“I Am Bobby Wolf” is the show’s funniest skit, in which an English player (Green) takes advice from a French Canadian cabbie (Curtis) on how to regain his prowess on and off the ice.

Clarke is hilarious as the cabbie’s ancient mother who has developed a rejuvenating salve.

The tragic love affair in “One Hundred Bucks” provides *Five Hole* with its most-lyrical and moving story. It is hauntingly narrated by Bidini.

Each skit is accompanied by an original song from the Rheostatics, a lively band that understands the demands of the material.

After its brief run here at the Rabbit’s High Performance Rodeo, *Five Hole* will go on tour. It needs some judicious editing.

As exciting as it may be, it is also self-indulgent and, in many places, over-written.



Five stars for *Five Hole*
Kevin De Vlaming
Gauntlet, University of Calgary
January 11, 2007

Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica set the bar for future probes into the steamy under-the-cup world of NHL players in Canada when it premiered last Thursday as this year’s High Performance Rodeo headline show. Dave Bidini, author of the *Five Hole* novel as well as member of the Canadian rock band Rheostatics, collaborated with the One Yellow Rabbit team to bring his music and prose together onstage at the Martha Cohen Theatre. The Rabbits shine in this theatrical adaptation of five short stories taken from the book, giving an amusingly quirky portrayal of offbeat lust and love in the best team sport on two skates.

“Finding the erotic nature of hockey was definitely an exploratory thing for me,” says Andy Curtis, longstanding member of One Yellow Rabbit and prominent player in *Five Hole*, “I guess when you’re watching the playoffs and they show you a replay in slo-mo, they could dub in a *wakachika-wakachika* and it would make it kind of sexy. What gets you all pumped up, chubbed up, or wet?”

Each scene could be considered as its own group-intimacy experience with Bidini and the OYR ensemble. The narrative starts off fresh as a virgin schoolgirl, presenting the audience with some things they've never seen before -- a hockey player secretly coveting the forbidden love of his team-mate in the relative sanctity of the men's locker-room and a nearly-nude woman dancing erotically in goalie pads and mask -- then the foreplay begins. Emotions heighten as a surprisingly beautiful story writhes out from under the covers of the nation's proudest pastime, building momentum and drawing the audience member closer and closer to the scene's climax.

This is where the effectiveness of Bidini's storytelling is most defined. The audience is forced to re-examine the familiar concept of sexuality through the lens of a motif familiar and particularly relevant to Canadians. The resulting union between sex and hockey is so unexpectedly harmonious that the audience, caught off guard, is unwittingly and fully seduced.

Possibly to avoid the recurring need for tissue paper, each scene's climax comes in the form of a brand new song performed live by the Rheostatics. This is more accurate than to suggest that the Rheostatics merely provide a soundtrack to the performance, or a series of musical interludes -- the narrative of each separate story flows neatly into a wrap-up piece offered up by Canada's premiere troupe of iconoclastic art-rockers.

Though the performance does start slow, with the opening piece "Joan," attempting to ease the viewer into such unfamiliar notions as lesbian hockey porn through a dialogue between two hockey buddies (Curtis and Michael Green), once the pace picks up it doesn't let up -- straight through to the touching story of a man whose career may only be saved through the application of a mystical salve to his testicles (played by Green in "I am Bobby Wolf"). Also, avid hockey fans will take more from the production than less patriotic theatregoers, who might miss some of the allusions Bidini snuck in throughout the dialogue.

"Dave sort of blended fiction and non-fiction," says Curtis, "He's been around the game of hockey quite a lot, so his breadth of knowledge consistently blows me away. It's like, 'Oh, number 12, no, that was Gary Belger that said that, in 1962. He played right-wing!'"

Accessibility and early lag aside, One Yellow Rabbit's performance of *Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica* entertains as a poetic salute to high-sticking both on and off the ice.