

Some 'static and a Yellow Rabbit

Diary: Denise Clarke & Dave Bidini

Denise Clarke and Dave Bidini, *National Post*

Published: Tuesday, January 02, 2007

This week's diarists are Denise Clarke of Calgary's One Yellow Rabbit Theatre and Dave Bidini of The Rheostatics. Clarke performs in Five Hole: Tales of Hockey Erotica, a stage show written by Bidini that opens Thursday at Calgary's EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts.

Denise: Good thing for end of the day drinks! We had a hell of a day: Packed with media, including a photo shoot with the worlds most pissed off photographer, who looked like she wanted to shoot us with something other than a camera, and finished up with a run through that thrilled and delighted -- well it thrilled me. My *Five Hole* monologue went the best it has gone. It helps that the room was focused and listening; with such a herd of actors and musicians, it can turn into a circus of distracting fun that leaves you stranded and wondering what the hell your next line is. Dave has written me a gem to perform; an erotic dispatch from a semi-naked female goaltender ? let's just say the challenge is on. But man oh man, the process is a blast. Rock, hockey, theatre and sex -- who could ask for anything more? US Yellow Rabbits are tickled pink to work with the Rheas. The show is structured so that they play their gorgeous songs between Dave's stories, which we tell. I love to look around the room when they are playing and see Andy and Michael grooving, Blake playing along on his air guitar, all of us super satisfied fans pretending to be as cool as our rocker heroes.

Dave: Thank God for drinking in the morning, cause theatre work is like working work. These are long days. I thought that actors were supposed to weep and run hiding into their dressing rooms with the overwhelming sensitivity of their performances, but OYR have proven to be far more resilient and determined than I'd suspected. Even though Denise and her friends are yoga fetishists, it hasn't lessened my impression of them. I mean, where are the hissy fits, the heart-ripped-open-by-the-power-of-the-script dramatics, the adultery, the inveterate drug-taking? Alas, OYR are stolidly professional, with the possible exception of director Blake Brooker, who seems to have an unreasonable interest in the body's small parts. Still, this is as much fun as one can have without being naked, or at least clothed in the presence of the sometimes undressed.

In praise of quiet petulance

Published: Wednesday, January 03, 2007

Denise: I guess everybody's image of how the other half lives gets challenged by being tossed into the deep end of a show pool. Cherished notions of rock stars sleeping till late afternoon are dashed when the band shows up and is running tunes by 10 a.m. No booze on their breath, no druggy stupors, sweet faced boys and one girl next door all being fun and kind.

There was one tiny moment of almost petulance when we asked if they could -- gulp -- turn it down. "It's like rockin' with one hand tied behind your back," we heard muttered, but damned if they didn't just nicely do it.



Truth be told, we can outdo any of them on the petulant front. Climb inside our heads when it comes to taking a note from the director, for instance, and you would witness the full on sulk of a teenager whose daddy took the keys away. We manage to look cool waiting for cues from a scene mate, but secretly we want to throw a terrible two's temper tantrum about the importance of timing!

Anyhow, it's good to be mature -- sort of -- and I am really digging the rapport between two teams of old colleagues who love to play together bringing their best games to the table.

Dave: It's easy for us, Denise: we don't go to bed. Truthfully, though, I'm kinda sick of hearing words that took me two years to write and songs that we've played over and over, *ad nauseam*, repeated back over twenty-eight consecutive days. But it's getting better all the time, and it's worth swallowing.

Weirder still, our lives are lived in the Secret Theatre rehearsal space, where it's always 2:13 p.m. I haven't had the time or energy to go to Recordland, or Pages bookstore, or any of my other favourite places in Calgary. Nor have I done a whit of Xmas shopping. If the kids are left wanting on Dec. 25th, I'll blame you.

No headline

Published: Thursday, January 04, 2007

Denise: OK, this is it. You can't hide anymore, Dave. I hope you can handle this because I am about to out you. Readers! Dave Bidini -- rock star/hockey guy to the max -- is also a full-blown romantic! This book *Five Hole* is supposed to be erotic hockey stories, and they are very sensual, but let's take for instance this character Dolores in the story "One Hundred Bucks." I love this floozie, a puck bunny from the '40s who falls in love with a fictional Toronto Maple Leaf named Eddie only to lose him when a Black Hawk gives a detailed description of her birthmark to Eddie during a face off. Naturally the birthmark is in a place only Eddie should know about and the tip-off kills him. It is a big old heartbreaker story made even more poignant when Dolores watches her man go, and we hear Martin Tielli's beautiful voice begin the song. That's right, it isn't just Dave. Martin, Ford, Barry and the exquisite Selina are all tender hearted, and for a dirty hockey play this thing goes right to the heart.

Dave: Naw, I'm just horny. In hockey, we never hear the stories of collapse and tragedy and failure. Only the violins-on-frozen pond nonsense, which is half as interesting. I owe a lot of this to Assistant Leaf GM Jeff Jackson and former Isle Brad Dalgarno, who, when we met, weren't afraid to paint real portraits of the insecurities, neurosis, personal struggles and hard lives of players. Knowing these things, we can better know our heroes; get a truer impression that allows us to relate to them in an age when every athlete is veiled by micro-management and team media spin. OYR has tapped into them and made them real.

It's been a year --let's hit the stage!

Published: Friday, January 05, 2007

Denise: It is exactly one year since the Rheos brought their show to us for last year's Festival and we stumbled onto this idea to work together. Sometimes this kind of light bulb goes on only to flicker and go out with inertia, but in this case Blake and Dave cooked it quick and here we are

onstage, with a published book and a bunch of gorgeous songs just waiting to be turned into a CD.

One might think it is too weird to throw rock, hockey and sex into one theatrical expression but it has sold well and attracted all kinds of public. I don't want to keep sending love notes to the band or anything, and I imagine that readers may wish there could have been more scandal and scorn between us all but, no, we continue to gas it up, having a ball and sharing the kind of creative hybrid that feels like we've been doing it for years. Everyone should get together with their favourite artists and play once a year. It's good for the soul. I say let's take this baby on the road and we'll show you rockers how to tour.

Dave: The reason this show is great for us is because we don't have to tour. One city, one bed, a newspaper at our front door every morning, pillow mints, plus-15s, the Auburn, a theatre to call home away from home. When you tour, the musical organism fluxes and changes, but this theatre racket allows you to sock in and study and perfect the work. It's more like recording than touring, really.

But that director guy, Blake: Man, he's got to go. He's like Phil Spector meets Werner Herzog, a horrible tyrant. I'm actually starting to believe that Hopper, Blake's dog, is the real genius behind all of his directorial skill and moxie. I believe that Hopper is sending Blake messages. He is merely a conduit for the dog's furry canine intuition. And can we get on with staging this thing, fer crying out loud?

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