

# Rocket Man flies high

By Penny Kramp  
and Dale McElrath

"I think its gonna be a long long time/till touch-down brings me round again to find/I'm not the man they think I am at home."

Elton John touched down in Charlotte last Thursday, and he brought us "around again to find" he's still the superstar who dominated the rock music world of the 1970's.

It was an evening of mixed emotions.

After years of touring, Elton is finally saying goodbye to the "yellow brick" life of the road.

And after nearly a decade of devout fan-dom, we both had high expectations. Very high.

We had also been to Charlotte in October to see him, but an illness forced him to cancel the show.

It was worth the wait. Elton didn't let us down.

He was everything we hoped for--and more.

At about 8:30 p.m. the lights dimmed, and we saw a small flashlight making its way toward the well-used white piano dominating the stage.

It was Elton. We both screamed. (Although Dale probably won't admit it.)

When the lights came up, we saw he was dressed in a pink jacket with tails and a straw boater (hat).

When the first strains of *Tiny Dancer* from his *MADMAN ACROSS THE WATER LP* began to fill the coliseum, the crowd let loose one loud primal scream of approval.

From that moment on, Elton entertained us with a repertoire of his classic tunes.

When he played *Candle in the Wind*, a poignant ballad of Marilyn Monroe's

tragic life, from 1973's *GOODEBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD* album, the stage lights turned the Coliseum into a sea of blue; and people held up their lighters as symbolic "candles."

"Goodbye Norma Jean/ though I never knew you at all/You had the grace to hold yourself/While those around you crawled."

Then came a rocking red, white, and blue rendition of *Philadelphia Freedom* that proved the flamboyant Elton is still alive and

poured out around the stage as the lighting system rotated above the stage like a satellite.

This was a more subdued Elton than the jeweled, feathered showman of days past. But Elton proved he hasn't lost his touch as he leaped on top of his piano and ripped off his jacket to fling it into the eager mob.

Although we were saddened to see the end of Elton's touring days, we feel lucky to have experi-



well.

He capped the number by pushing his piano off the stage (Don't worry, it survived!) and throwing the piano bench backstage, to the cheers of the crowd.

The highlight of the evening was a long set of the classic *Rocket Man*. Clouds of green smoke

enched the on-stage charisma of a truly talented musician.

Elton said it for us in his bopping show-closer, *Crocodile Rock*.

"Crocodile rockin' is something shockin'/when your feet just can't keep still/I never knew me a better time/And I guess I never will."



Staff photo by Sylvia Hawkins

SCOTT MEBANE (r) AND MARGE RUIZ portray speech therapist James Leeds and his deaf pupil and love interest, Sarah Norman, in "CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD."

## World of deaf full of sound

By Anne Snuffer

Deafness is a silence full of sound. That thought was artfully portrayed in Theatre-UNCA's production of "Children of a Lesser God" by Mark Medoff last week in Carol Belk Theatre.

From the opening moments to the final poignant scenes, the audience was aware of the frustration of the deaf living in a "hearing" world.

Scott Mebane as Speech Therapist James Leeds gave a powerful and often humorous performance as he wooed and won the heart of his pupil, Sarah Norman, played by Marge Ruiz.

Mebane was unrelenting as he tried to communicate and understand his deaf student's hatred for "hearing" people.

Both Mebane and Ruiz's use of sign language was extraordinary. Mebane skillfully combined words with gestures, although he never learned sign language before this production.

Ruiz adeptly enacted the trying role of a young girl, deaf from birth, who finds meaning outside of the frustrating institutional life she has always known.

Colin White as Orin, and Cathy Sheehan as Lydia, added a light touch of humor and a human element to the play's profound plot.

At times however, they were difficult to understand. Possibly because Belk Theatre is round, and in certain positions

they were bound to have their backs to some of the audience.

Also, their assumed speech impediments naturally made understanding more difficult. "Hearing" people often have a problem understanding the speech of the deaf, which was probably the point the playwright was trying to make.

Jim Nave as Mr. Franklin, and Amy Grant as Mrs. Norman, were weak additions to the play's movement and fluidity.

Some of the plot's emotional moments were disconcerting, especially when the teacher-student relationship blossomed so suddenly.

This, of course, was the fault of the playwright rather than the actors or actresses.

Lighting was simple, yet effectively dramatic, and the use of classical music at appropriate intervals added an interesting flavor.

The ending was sudden yet tantalizing, with Mebane and Ruiz giving notably moving renditions of a marriage which fell apart because of differences between one who heard and one who didn't.

"Children of a Lesser God" had its moments of weakness which detracted from its potential impact.

But it provided an insight into the world of the handicapped which "normal" people often fail to perceive.

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