



Members of the cast in the Carolina Repertory Company production of 'Mad Dog Blues.'

## Lab Theatre's 'Snapshots': A successful experiment

by Robin Clark  
Features Editor

The UNC Laboratory Theatre production of Mark Nielson's *Snapshots* that played this week in Graham Memorial was alert and refreshing.

Through a brisk succession of dramatic vignettes, *Snapshots* explores a variety of aspects of photography including birdie watching, mug shots, centerfolds, portraits, scrapbooks and a spattering of other photographic expressions and perversions along the way.

If that sounds panoramic, it is. None of these skits could be expanded into a full length drama, but none is asked to. The short plays are but snapshots themselves, portraits of one man's impressions of the photographic medium and the various human reactions to it.

This was the first time I'd ever seen a Lab Theatre production. I was always put off by their name, imagining some dark, diabolical cell in the bowels of Venable Hall where directors turn captive audiences into guinea pigs for their tortuously boring dramatic experiments.

*Snapshots* may well have been experimental. Stools and chairs comprised the only props on an otherwise bleak stage, forcing the players to improvise and pantomime constantly. Lighting, too, which was handled by Charlotte Rouse, was minimal.

But Laboratory Theatre was not at all the torture I anticipated. If I was a captive audience, it was because I was captivated by the versatility of the text and by its skillful execution. If *Snapshots* was an experiment, it was a successful one. And if this production is any indication of what can be expected, Lab Theatre is to be highly recommended.

Russell Graves directed the production, which opened with a narrative recollection of holiday sittings for the standard group portraits which will appear on the family Christmas

card. Maggie Roberts was engaging as the comic, if somewhat mechanically animated, narrator.

"The Portrait," featuring Ginger Bridges, Greg Vines and Brian Hargrove, parodies the equally laughable genre of baby pictures (or the "Pop flash, pop flash, he's such a sweet little punkin, yes he is, goochie-goo," motif).

The indignant baby provides comic inversion, stepping radically out of infancy in several asides to urge: "Babies of the world unite! Boycott Pampers and Kimbies... tell Gerber to mind their own business—their only business."

Irony emerges in "Centerfold." Two models for a girlie magazine, Pepper Schwartz (whose cleavage is clossal), and Eloise Lane (who boasts the "best derriere in the business"), discover that their employer plans to combine the best of both bodies by creating "Pepper Lane" through photographic imposition. Susan Hoisington and Boo Devane were cast to perfection.

Other skits explored the more serious

aspects of the photographic medium.

"Mug Shots" concerns three female jailmates (a prostitute, a shoplifter and a bank teller whose offense is unknown) in a bizarre psychological drama in which insanity becomes contagious. Crystal Wright, Jeannie Justice and Dixie Fields played the jailmates with grace and confidence despite difficult transitions.

"Scrapbook," the play's last vignette, which seems to deal with the ambivalent nature of photography as reality and illusion, was thought-provoking if ambitious for such a short work. Debbie Maxwell was devastating in this solo performance and carried the skit with poise and timing despite some awkward moments.

Other commendable performances included Carmen Flowers in "In a Flash," Margaret Brewington in "Made in Japan" and James Cantrell in "Life with Father." "No Concessions" provides a look at the lighter side of subtitling, but the script carried Debbie Garren, not vice versa.

## PRC's 'Mad Dog Blues' is bald, anachronistic American folklore

Everything was well-timed about the professional debut of the Playmakers Repertory Company last weekend: the need for such a company, the quality of production, the level of energy and the audience response. Everything, that is, except the play itself, an unfortunately anachronistic and bald vehicle.

"Mad Dog Blues" hangs somewhere between Monterey and *Hair*, and its hero (Kosmo, played by Mark Phialas) is similarly disjointed. He is a rock star in the West Coast tradition of Joplin and Hendrix, halfway down the road to burning himself out and still nowhere near home. In 60's lingo, which is the framing vernacular of this profound work, he has "lost touch with his roots" and is "trying to put something together."

Kosmo is a symbol of that lost personality just as the others are symbols of its roots.

Therein lies the flaw and baldness of "Mad Dog Blues": everyone behaves merely as symbol, posing, speaking and moving just as they are expected to do, without any unexpected depth or twist. There are brilliant flashes of such promise, as when Kosmo shouts at Yahooodi, "I get it! You're gonna run me down in your Mustang and take the treasure!" or when Paul Bunyan sings a 50's-style torch song to Dietrich. But such moments cannot sustain a play which spends more time being serious than comic, but is denied tragedy by its very triteness.

The need and potential for the comic was clearly evidenced by Donna Davis as Mae West, who minced her every line a la "Why don't you come up and see me some time, big boy?" Her courageous overvamping was equally overreceived by an audience probably expecting a much-publicized "outrageous romp," and not this limping vehicle.

Vehicle aside, the production was quite good. The cast, all graduates, professionals or faculty, reflected the quality of its depth of experience. Especially worthy were Dallas Greer as the tubercular Waco, Gordon Ferguson as plain Paul Bunyan, and Maggie Tucker as the Blonde Venus. Both Mezz and Phialas captured the desperate demeanor of their pivotal roles, Phialas helplessly trailing the microphone of his songless character.

The music is excellent but curious: overpowering before the show, it practically disappeared during the performance, not to pick up again until near the conclusion. Although each character got more or less one song, several more musical numbers would pick up the fragmented pace in the middle of each act. And it would be more effective if Kosmo could not bring himself to sing until the closing "Home" song, instead of harmonizing with Waco on "Travelin' Shoes."

The theatre-in-the-rectangle situation in Graham Memorial was deftly directed by Tom Haas, who maximized platforms and spots to move through

Kosmo and Yahooodi's visions. Technical effects were well-handled, from potentially awkward microphones to a life-size facsimile of Babe the Blue Ox on coasters.

Although "Mad Dog Blues" closes on a flourish of energy, the wait is finally not worth it. To hear Kosmo intone "I gotta get back—the revolution's on" and then play hide and seek with a pirate displaces the viewer by a decade and a couple of centuries, respectively; and try valiantly though they might, the new CRC cannot provide a measure of unity and message that is simply not there. Like Kosmo, like Yahooodi, like that whole generation that sang the mad dog blues, Shepard and his obvious play just never do "put something together."

### theatre

by Michael McFee

'Mad Dog Blues,' by Sam Shepard, produced by the Playmakers Repertory Company and directed by Tom Haas

The play follows Kosmo's loose-ended odyssey of mind and body, much of which is spent keeping up with his hyper, junkie friend Yahooodi (Jon Mezz), who has split for the jungle and stumbled upon promise of buried treasure. Time and space are no obstacle to Kosmo and Yahooodi, who communicate across the globe just by calling each other's names and standing in a handy spotlight.

Such tedious suspension of belief continues, as Kosmo finally teams up with Mae West and Waco Texas in pursuit of Yahooodi, Captain Kidd and Marlene Dietrich. Add Paul Bunyan in search of Babe and Jesse James hot after bags of booty, and the American mythology is complete.

That's just what playwright Sam Shepard would have us believe: that these legends of lore and media, along with the new suicidal symbols of Joplin and Hendrix and even Brian Jones, are intrinsic to our national psychosis.



Riding the Himalaya at the State Fair, which continues through this week.

It's lucky for all of us ... that the Dandelion is putting everything we want the most

# ON SALE!

THURSDAY, OCT. 16 through SATURDAY, OCT. 25

JEANS!! 20% Off	TOPS! 20-50% Off	WORK SHIRTS! 25% Off
--------------------	---------------------	-------------------------

FREE PARKING ON THE FIRST ROW

at the **Dandelion**  
113 West Franklin St.

# janis ian

friday  
nov. 7 / 8 p.m.  
memorial hall

a carolina union presentation

tickets \$3/available  
to unc students  
only / 2 per i.d.  
at union desk

public sales begin  
thursday

## DTH Classifieds

<p><b>FOR SALE</b></p> <p>OVER 500 RECENT LPs FOR SALE \$1.00-\$2.50. Rock, Folk, Jazz, Blues, etc. Wed., Oct. 22nd through Fri. Oct. 24th 12-5:30 p.m. at TOWN HALL. Beatles, Stones, Dylan, etc.</p> <p>Mercedes-190 SL 1959, exc. cond. needs body work. New radiata, brakes, clutch, suspension, two tops. Much more \$3600. 489-0709, Durham</p> <p>Room and meal accommodations available immediately for one female at Granville East. Contact Granville Towers South Business Office, 929-7143.</p> <p>Room and meal accommodations available immediately for one male at Granville West. Contact Granville Towers South Business Office, 929-7143.</p>	<p><b>MISCELLANEOUS</b></p> <p>"Riding Easy in the Harness" describes true freedom. Lecture on Christian Science at 4:00 Wednesday, October 22, Room 215, Union. Free, of course.</p> <p>99c says you get all the pancakes you can eat and all the coffee you can drink. Monday through Friday at The Waffle Shoppe, 203 E. Franklin Street. Open 24 hours.</p> <p>FIGHT INFLATION with WDBS FM-107. Get a sticker plus list of places giving discounts to people with stickers. WDBS, Box 4742, Durham, N.C. 27706.</p> <p>EUROPE 75/76 NO FRILLS STUDENT-TEACHER CHARTER FLIGHTS. RESERVE: THANKSGIVING &amp; XMAS. Write or Call GLOBAL STUDENT-TEACHER TRAVEL, 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017 (212) 379-3532. Our 8th Reliable Year.</p> <p>Pro-Life Pregnancy Counseling. Call BIRTHCHOICE 7pm-10pm Monday thru Friday. 942-3030.</p> <p>Want to stop smoking? Psychology experiment will teach you self-control techniques for quitting smoking. If interested call 933-6593 during office hours.</p>
---	---

Drop in... for the holidays

Tuck a KODAK Color Print into holiday gifts, notes or greeting folders. Bring us your favorite slide or KODACOLOR Negative. It's economical yet can mean so much!

Special quantity prices Extras: Holiday (showcase) greeting folders. Drop in, and order for the holidays now!

**10% OFF BEFORE NOVEMBER 5**

**foister's**  
CAMERA STORE, INC.  
an American Store in Chapel Hill

COLOR PROCESSING Kodak

# MANHATTAN TRANSFER DISCO

Wednesday, Oct. 22nd  
**Happy Hour!**  
9:30 - 10:30 p.m!

COLUMBIA ST. ENTRANCE BELOW THE ZOOM.

Picture ID Required.

MANHATTAN TRANSFER OPEN WED-SAT, 8:30 UNTIL...

SHELDON SOFFER presents

# LUIS RIVERA

SPANISH DANCE COMPANY

with FEATURED DANCERS and MUSICIANS

"VIRTUOSITY"  
Anna Kisselgoff, New York Times

"BRILLIANT"  
Walter Terry, Saturday Review

"ANOTHER STAR...  
ANOTHER STATISTIC  
IN DANCE HISTORY"  
Greer Johnson, Cue Magazine

LECTURE-DEMONSTRATION  
Wednesday  
Oct. 29/3 p.m.  
Great Hall

A Carolina Union Presentation

PERFORMANCE  
Thursday  
Oct. 30/8 p.m.  
Memorial Hall

Tickets \$2 at Union Desk