

Arts & Entertainment

Some hot Koko takes the chill off winter

By Christopher Burbach

The little girl who sang gospel hymns in church back in Memphis, Tenn., is now "Queen of the Blues," but she's still singing for the same reasons.

"I do what I do because I enjoy it," Koko Taylor said in an interview before her show at the Zoo Bar Thursday night. "I ain't gettin' rich, that's for sure."

"I grew up singin' gospel, blues, listenin' to the blues — Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters. Them's my influences."

Taylor resembles the late great McKinley Morganfield (a.k.a. Muddy Waters) in many ways. She's short and round and she belts the blues with a reverberating, gravelly voice that forces its way out from somewhere deep inside her spirit and delves into her audience's soul.

Her listeners can either feel assaulted or carried away by her music. Indifference is simply not an alternative. Taylor sings with that kind of passion, ensnaring an audience in her musical web, raveling vocal threads around them and sending those who succumb into euphoria with a deadly blue sting.

"Every class appreciate the blues. I've worked an audience with some of the richest people, and they rich, and they love the blues."

—Koko Taylor

"Are you ready for the blues?", she said, "'cause we goin' all the way down to the basement."

What does Koko Taylor get out of all this? "Satisfaction. It mean that I'm doin' somethin' to help people all over the world by makin' them happy with my music. I help lift peoples' spirits. Satisfaction."

Taylor said blues music is for everyone. "It's no particular class of people. Everybody, every class appreciate the blues. I've worked an audience with some of the richest people, and they rich, and they love the blues."

As for the future of blues music, Taylor said, "The blues is definitely on the rise. My audience is so much bigger then they was even last year. Especially young white kids."

Why? "Not a lot of black clubs have blues music now," she said. "Blues just ain't as popular with blacks as with whites right now."

One place Koko Taylor and her band are popular is the Zoo Bar. "I have a lot of fans and followers here. I been comin' to Lincoln for the last ten years." A mob of people forked over the \$4.50 cover charge Thursday night, filling the bar to standing room by 8:30 p.m. After a solid warm-up set by Lincoln's Backbeats, Taylor played for less than two hours —

but they were two very good hours. The crowd didn't disperse until Taylor finished singing just before closing time, when it left sweaty and satisfied.

As the Queen sang, "Hey everybody, let's have some fun. You only live once and when you're dead you're gone." She has a way of getting that point across.

'Battery' dies on weak dialogue

By Mona Z. Koppelman

A battery of problems plagued a local theater group's production of *Battery*: unlikely dialogue, unconvincing characters, uncomfortable scene changes and an unmentionable number of elliptical puns on the word "battery."

Playwright Daniel Therriault's script seemed to be more at fault than the tirelessly struggling performances of James Cook, Paul Pearson and Chetley Kincaid.

Theater Review

Stagestruck Productions' *Battery* ran through Sunday night at the Spigot, 1624 O St.

Pearson was puzzling in his role as Stan, a manic depressive, schizophrenic or mentally handicapped electrician's apprentice. (You pays your money, you takes your pick.)

Stan works for Rip, played by Cook. Rip refers to himself as the Washington Monument, a man who would rather "stick his piston" in a woman than look at her.

Rip is an electronics wizard with the vocabulary of a 1950s greaser. His non-stop sex-automobile analogies contrast wrenchingly with his pseudo-philosophical relationship with Stan. (The Great Battery analogies: "I'm the pitcher, you're the catcher." "We're the same current — AC/AC.") Of course, Stan hangs on every monosyllable that drools from Rip's mouth, and of course, Rip turns this to his advantage. (Very predictable duo relationship.)

The third leg of this barstool is Rip's main "bumper," Brandy. Brandy is a gum-chewing, leggy southern blonde, mysteriously transplanted to Rip's Electric in Chicago.

Battery struggles to develop new twists in the eternal triangle. So during the course of the evening we are treated to such wild stretches of suspended disbelief as shock treatments, amnesia beatings, red clown noses and therapeutic word-associations.

This is in Rip's Electric in Chicago. Remember that. Rip has Playboy centerfolds on his pegboard.

To clarify, Stan has a frustrated sexual crush on Brandy. Brandy thinks Stan is the closest thing to a wet-nosed weasel. She teases Stan mercilessly for Rip's amused benefit.

Rip leaves one day. Brandy and Stan confront each other with their mutual possessiveness toward Rip. Brandy tells Stan he sucks on Rip like a pacifier, and Stan beats Brandy's face in — then knocks himself out. But "he doesn't remember." (His mom was like that, too.) Rip decides to help his little buddy and to keep him from kicking the heck out of Brandy. Brandy wants to charge Stan with assault and (what else) battery. So Rip completes a nifty gadget which gives shock treatments . . . the Treat Machine.

Rip uses the Treat Machine to magically transform Stan into a real neat guy (yes, the playwright read *Flowers for Algernon* in eighth grade, too). Stan, the real neat guy, manages to win over Brandy by calling her Drambouie and wearing a red clown nose and telling her she has real intellect. (Hints for potential Casanovas out there.)

Stan and Brandy play word associations (hand, heart, blood, life, birth, rebirth, and so it goes) And discover love in Rip's Electric. They conspire to leave Chicago behind for greener pastures in Houston. Before they leave they yell at Rip, and Rip gets his moment in the audience's sympathetic eye.

And that's it.

With a great plot line like that, what went wrong with *Battery*? Out-of-character dialogue. Back when Stan was a sweetly endearing dummy, he would break out with things like: "When I throw a penny in

Continued on Page 7

Serendipity

Poetry by Mary C. Bolly
Illustration by Dannel Leffler

Growing

Each! There it goes again
Ouch! Those growing pains
stretching reaching grasping
for me
I've learned from it
Mend and weave a new network of friends
these funny laughing creatures
that make you feel so warm
Growing can be fun

Walking Tight

When the wondrous technique you
that dares to precariously tiptoe forward
and friends supporting, pulling, prodding,
and nudging
Both encouraging you to stroke a balance
in developing and realizing
your special potential
in the art of personhood

Who Am I

Inside I feel like a little person
But I put on a big act
Today I might feel insecure
But tomorrow I may conquer the world
Who am I?
And if I let you know
Would it make a difference?

Music for the Mindless

Twitch shake and rock
Stomp swing and turn
Gravitate motivate relax
Mellow fellows bob and burn

... to Music for the Mindless

Breathing romping writhing
Squish and squake those eyes
Sneak around, renew

... to Music for the Mindless

Take the click-snap those fingers
... to Music for the Mindless

Late

Late again, late again
In my dreams where have I been
Come on, drink it up?
SNATCH some speed-ZOOM and twitch
Mornings really are a bitch

Cocktail Waitress

Would you care for anything to drink?
(smile and wink, smile and wink)
May I take those empty glasses?
(shrug off passes, shrug off passes)
Would you let me light your smoke?
(gasp and choke, gasp and choke)
Oh, yes, I have some change I think
(clink-clink-clink-clink)
May I get you another pitcher
(Coors Light, Miller, Budweiser)
Here's your change
(what? cheapen? what?)
I won't be your date, I'm a waitress!
(I confess I'm in distress)
Can't you see it's just a job?
(go home and sob, go home and sob)

Sometimes

Sometimes
instead of being alone
I want a friend
Sometimes
instead of being gale
I want to shout
Sometimes
instead of being single
I want a partner
Sometimes
instead of being afraid
I want to have courage
Sometimes
instead of being mad
I want to be loved