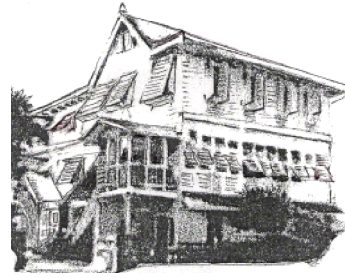


WOODBINE (*The Last of the Redmen*)

A one-man play by Michael Gilkes

In the "Ballet Room" of Cara Lodge, Georgetown, Guyana.

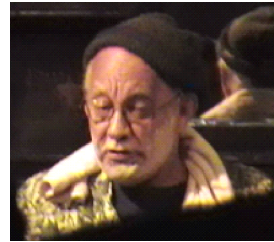
Produced by Gems Theatre Productions and Heartland Productions.



Once upon a time, in the mythical city of Georgetown, in a magical country of British Guiana, there was a mystically vibrant middle class of 'red' people flourishing in a creative and imaginative world of its own. Suddenly, in what seemed an instant, huge political and social changes transformed the society into a culture of migration. This privileged class disintegrated and all but disappeared within two decades.

WOODBINE asks the question **"Who killed the middle class?"**

For six evenings in January 2006, in the living room of the legendary "Taitt's House in Murray street", Gilkes, as the last of those Redmen, now confined to a wheelchair in the local alms house, mesmerized his audience, remnants of the middle class of Georgetown, with a tour de force of controlled acting. It was remarkable theatre of the highest standard, with the courageous production taking place in the authentic location where once upon a time it all happened.



The wheel-chaired erratic "old fart"

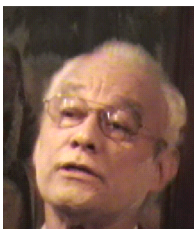
Already challenged by the confined venue, miraculously co-producer **Gem Madhoo** manipulated and 'machinated' to seat 90 for the six performances. The audio, power-point projection, staging and lighting facilities were impeccably operated by relatively young and inexperienced theatre enthusiasts.

Gilkes daringly directed himself (always risky), and apart from a few minor staging slips, he created a remarkable achievement. I was fortunate to be in Guyana to also see his technical and dress rehearsals, and was nothing less than astonished. Mike is my contemporary and part family – his story could have been mine – and I certainly would/could not have undertaken the task he imposed on himself. It would have been next to impossible to memorize 21 pages of passionate single line script, running more than two hours on stage. It may be that **Clairmonte Taitt**, the actor for whom he wrote the play, balked at the enormity of the task, encouraging Michael to undertake it himself. Clairmonte, like Michael, lives in Barbados and is still one of Guyana's and the Caribbean's finest actors/violinists.



(teenager and his ticker bike ready to prowl the seawall on a Sunday afternoon)

WOODBINE is a very personal, one-of-a-kind experience, and even if theatre is not particularly your 'thing', but you have a passion for language, politics, social issues, and enjoy a little bit of circus, then to miss THE LAST OF THE REDMEN, is to 'miss half your life'. There are plans to take it to Barbados, St.Lucia, Toronto and New York.



defence lawyer



judge

Michael Gilkes and his WOODBINE should be experienced everywhere, and by the entire diaspora. As should the wonderful flute of Guyanese **Keith Waithe**, **Henry Muttoo's GIMSITORY FESTIVAL** in the Caymans, singer/songwriter **Aubrey Cumming's** rich voice, and as the four decades of **Dave Martin** and his perennial **Tradewinds** have been.

For a more detailed and comprehensive review of WOODBINE, see arts critic Al Creighton's

<http://www.stabroeknews.com/index.pl/article?id=42862414>

Also the Chronicle's

Ken Corsbie .. is .. "Caribbean Voices"

95 High Hill Drive, Sound Beach, NY 11789. kcorsbie@optonline.net www.kencorsbie.com