

Theater version differs from movie

# UNL's 'Grease' is fun show

By Bill Allen  
Senior Reporter

UNL Theatre's production of the musical "Grease" is a fun, entertaining show and is highly recommended, especially to those who don't usually attend live theater.

There, now that I have that out of the way I can go on with the review.

The show is fun, the music and singing are good and the cast showed real exuberance. They seemed to play with and for the audience, making the play warm and interesting, even though it wasn't always polished, especially toward the end.

If you were a teenager and saw the movie version of this play a few years ago with Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta, you will notice several differences in the live stage production.

## REVIEW THEATRE

A few songs were different in the movie (to suit Olivia's voice, I'm guessing) and the original script used here contains some language and situations that never made it to the teeny-bopper screen.

The movie was forged for the younger crowd, but the play isn't. It's a parody of those cherished memories of the '50s crowd. The lyrics of the songs mimic the early strained rock and roll hits of the era, and the dress is a total stereotype of the different cliques.

Eugene, the class brain and nerd, Sandy the virginal "nice" girl, "greasers" and the "Pink Ladies" comprise some of these stereotypes in costume. The costume designs of Wayne White are appropriate, not too flashy and definitely nostalgic.

I must admit that some of the '50s parody was lost on me. Many of the older audience members chuckled at things that didn't click with me.

The show did click. The story line of "Grease" is not too heavy, which is why I think it might be enjoyable for some that don't attend much live theater. They won't have to work very much to enjoy this play.

Sandy (C. Leslie Gilreath) is the class virginal type that is interested in Danny (Brad Schluterbusch), the leader of the class gang, the Burger Palace Boys. The plot line, what there is of one,

centers on the pair's relationship. Gilreath has a good voice and her acting is pretty good. She does a fine job of showing the audience the internal struggles she is suffering because of peer pressure to drink, smoke and perhaps even "go all the way."

Schluterbusch as Danny is adequate, but his voice didn't match the excellence we got from many of the other characters. He did do a good job of acting nonchalantly, but I never got the impression he was the tough-guy gang leader that he was supposed to be.

The good thing about the stage production, unlike the movie, is that the play focuses more on the whole cast, not just Sandy and Danny. Other characters gave performances just as notable as these two, and the whole blended together rather well.

I especially enjoyed the comic Doody and Koger (Jeff Talbott and Danny Johnson) and thought Treva Tegmeier did a fine job both musically and as an actress with the role of the promiscuous and confused Rizza.

Three things stick in my mind as highlights.

First, there was a live five-piece band performing the music, instead of having it piped in from God-knows-where like on Solid Gold. Band members Todd Smith, Kimberly Warren, Mike Brannan, Chuck Phillips and Paul Henderson all did a great job.

Second, the singing showed versatility and ability on the part of the cast. "Greased Lightning," was a fast-paced rock and roll tune about Kenickie's (Kenneth Page) hot rod, while Teg-

meier did a fine job of slowing it down with "Look At Me, I'm Sandra Dee." Most of the show's fifteen songs were performed well.

Third, Richard Harris, as Teen Angel, was sensational. Harris sang "Beauty School Dropout," to the forlorn Frenchy (Joyce C. Welsch). The voice was smooth, and the accompanying motions and inflections were perfect. He had a restrained energy in the part that made me wish he had had a bigger part in the play.

I attended last Friday night and the last fifteen minutes of that performance were flat. The play lost its enthusiasm and seemed choppy and strained.

The finale was flat. If the entire show had the same intensity level as the last few minutes this review would be about twenty lines long and suggest the play not run its full engagement.

Luckily though, the first two hours were humorous and bubbly, with just enough rough language to remain innocent and nostalgic.

The show will begin again tonight at 8 p.m. and run through Saturday, March 12 to 16 at UNL's Howell Theatre, then again Wednesday through Saturday, March 20 to 23. There will also be matinee performances at 3 p.m. March 8, 16 and 23.

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