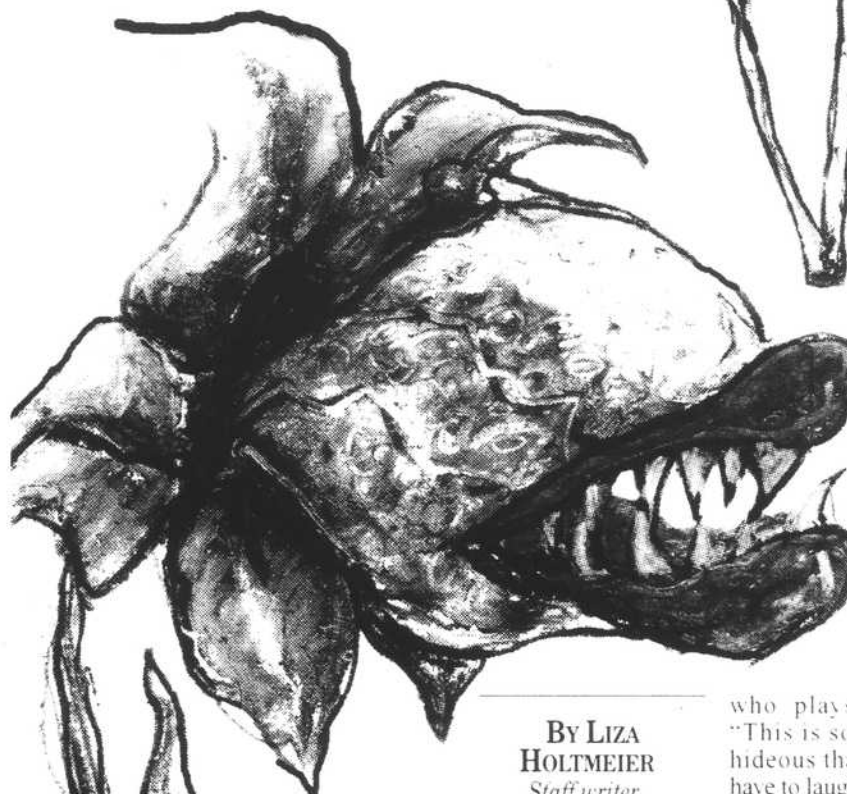


# Veggie Burgers

Star City Dinner Theatre's menu to feature 'Little Shop of Horrors'



BY LIZA  
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Staff writer

A blood-sucking plant descends from outer space, wreaking havoc on the downtrodden souls of Skid Row.

It sounds like the plot to a typical B-grade horror flick.

But then Howard Ashman and Alan Menken came along and made the carnivorous monster sing. Yes, the team responsible for Disney's "The Little Mermaid" and "Beauty and the Beast" also created the dark musical comedy "Little Shop of Horrors." Their creation has become one of the most popular musical comedies in the United States and resulted in a \$30 million film starring Rick Moranis and Steve Martin.

The Star City Dinner Theatre, 803 Q St., Suite 100, opens its own production of the famous horror comedy tonight.

The play opens with Seymour Krelborn, a meek flower shop assistant, finding an unusual plant one day during a trip downtown. After naming it Audrey II after his secret love, Seymour attempts to care for the plant. He fails miserably until he discovers the plant's special diet: human blood.

As the plant grows, so does Seymour's fame. All of the papers want to know about his green, and now heavily bandaged, thumb. But as Seymour tries to keep up with his fame and the plant's growing appetite, various characters in the play begin to mysteriously disappear.

Needless to say, "Little Shop of Horrors" is not a typical musical comedy. Audiences will not see the candy-coated adventures of a spunky red-headed orphan or the high school antics of a group of greasers and their Pink Ladies.

Instead, this musical has enough blood and carnage to keep the residents of Salem's Lot happy.

"It's such an odd little world (the characters) live in," said Kristi Wilson,

who plays Audrey. "This is so dark and hideous that you just have to laugh."

Because the material leans toward the darker side, Wilson said, the actors avoided approaching it as they would a regular comedy.

"You have to approach it as if everyone is real. Then, the humor and tenderness come through," Wilson said.

Bob Rook, the play's director, added that a more realistic approach helped the actors avoid making the play melodramatic.

In addition to the play's humor, the technical difficulties of the plant, Audrey II, pushed the cast and crew.

Though Audrey II begins as a small, potted, innocent-looking Venus fly-trap, by the end of the play, his giant mouth and tendrils cover the entire stage. The giant Audrey II requires three puppeteers to operate. Between the miniature and giant Audrey IIs, there are three other versions of increasing size.

For two of the carnivorous plants, actor David Claus is actually inside of the puppet. Hooking Claus up to a microphone from the inside and balancing his sound level with the other actors proved to be a painstaking task for the production team.

For the giant puppet, the technical crew had to synchronize the sound of Audrey II's voice with the movements of the puppet.

While the technical crew dealt with the sound elements, the actors had to learn to react to the plant as if it were just another actor.

"I have all this anger and emotion and no one else on stage," said Jonathan Hornyak, who plays Seymour. "I had difficulty in the beginning singing and working without another person. Now, some of my favorite scenes are when



SEYMOUR (Jonathan Hornyak), a lonely clerk, comforts his girlfriend, Audrey (Kristi Wilson), during a dress rehearsal of the play "Little Shop of Horrors" at The Star City Dinner Theatre on Tuesday night. The play opens tonight.

MATT MILLER/DN

it's just me and the plant."

For Rook, the plant has become so real that he dislikes being alone with it late at night.

"Audiences will be in awe of this plant. It looks like it really could eat people," Rook said.

If all goes well, the audience should be just as frightened as Rook.

"Little Shop of Horrors" runs tonight through Sunday, Oct. 15-18, 22-25 and 30-31. Dinner and show tickets for Friday and Saturday nights are \$22, while Thursday and Sunday performances are \$20. Show-only seats are \$12 for Friday and Saturday and \$10 for Thursday and Sunday.

Dinner for the evening shows is served at 6 p.m. with curtain at 7:30 p.m. Sunday dinners are

served at 1 p.m. with curtain at 2:30 p.m. For tickets, call the Star City Theatre Box Office (402) 472-8277.

MELANIE FALK/DN

New Releases

Sunny Day Real Estate  
"How It Feels To Be Something On"  
Sub Pop Records  
Grade: A-

With "How It Feels To Be Something On," Sunny Day Real Estate rises from the ruins of a split that appeared to end one of the best things to come out of the Northwest since Kurt Cobain.

The album is the band's first since a breakup in 1995 that saw lead singer/guitarist Jeremy Enigk pursue a solo career, while bassist Nate Mendel and drummer William Goldsmith joined Dave Grohl's post-Nirvana project, the Foo Fighters.

Three of Sunny Day's four original members (including guitarist Dave Hoerner) returned for the band's third Sub Pop effort. Mendel abstained and decided to continue his career as a Foo Fighter. Ex-Mommyhead Jeff Palmer replaced him on the bass during the album's recording and executes his new role in convincing fashion.

Sunny Day shows it still knows how to craft majestic emo-rock melodies on "How It Feels," by composing the moody songs that made them notorious among indie rock circles. As on previous records, each track slowly evolves into thunderous roars of aggressive high-strung rock and hypnotic vocal effects.

This sound is neither punk nor pop, but rests somewhere in between, exuding the members' past experiences as members of hardcore and punk bands.

In fact, each song follows this unrivaled formula by casually progressing in directions you would never imagine from the succession of gently strummed intros.

"Pillars," the first track, sets the tone for the rest of the album with Enigk's powerful vocals, which are reminiscent of Perry Farrell's striking range. And while Enigk's voice may be one of the highlights of Sunny Day's music, it does not diminish the talents of the other members.

"How It Feels" climaxes in the

middle with "100 Million," the title track and "The Prophet." These three songs give the album an identity far above past efforts through their lush instrumentation and the enchanting vocals of Enigk.

It is difficult to skip any of Sunny Day's latest offerings because they're all so good, a sign that the band still has all it used to, and possibly a little more.

What "How It Feels" lacks is the powerful punk anthems that painted "Dairy," Sunny Day's first full-length from 1994. Four years later, the band seems content with creating music that reflects a movement away from where it started, a direction that is indeed promising.

Jim Zavodny

