



May 15, 2008

Mid-Life! The Crisis Musical

By: Rick A. Elina

Theatre Three concludes its 2007-2008 Theatre Too Season with the musical *Mid-Life! The Crisis Musical* as the sixth production of this current season. Never has a crisis been so enjoyable.

The simplistic set designed by David Walsh is just enough. With the amazing talent of this seasoned cast, they need nothing more than a few unit set pieces to explore the humorous side of “middle-aging.” The promotional materials promise, “The series of musical numbers and vignettes will appeal to anyone with thinning hair, growing waistlines and ticking biological clocks.” Even if you’re not there yet, but know someone afflicted with these inevitable maladies, it doesn’t matter. Humor always rings loudest when there’s a glint of truth involved that causes us to laugh at ourselves.

Theatre Too is the smaller black box venue located in the basement of Theatre Three. But the space works well for this musical showcase. The intimate setting allows the facial expressions and the voices of the actors to reach the audience with the necessary wattage to deliver this brand of shtick humor. No need for hearing aids or spectacles here.

From one of the opening lines of the opening number, “Welcome to Mid-Life,” you know you’re in the right place. You can’t help but feel that you’re among friends who understand. “If you’ve come to curse your fate, or start to date at forty-eight. If you sleep through football recaps or if you’ve blown out both your kneecaps. If you still like Chuck Berry, if your ears are very hairy, welcome to mid-life!” Sure, the lyrics will entertain and at times, even cause uncontrollable laughter, but it’s the 6 actors/singers who make the show work.

Jenny Thurman’s rendition of “Biological Clock” early in the first act sets into motion a pacing that is nearly perfect throughout the show. When the

three men, B.J. Cleveland, Randy Perlman, and Doug Jackson perform “Weekend Warriors” as wannabe basketball players, you can’t help but think maybe these guys are exactly what the Mavericks need. Maybe they should be recruited, if not for their skill then for the sheer entertainment provided by trash-talking middle-aged men trying to dribble a basketball.

There is also a poignant moment in all this hilarity. It’s the bittersweet song “The Long Goodbye,” performed by B.J. Cleveland, Amy Mills and Sally Soldo. This number comes late in the Second Act. There’s no spoiler here, so let’s just say it’s a fitting tribute and fine way to bring closure to a fantastic performance.

Mid-Life! The Crisis Musical runs through Sunday May, 18th. Visit their website at Theatre3Dallas.com or call 214-871 3300 for more details.

Rick A. Elina is a playwright based in Plano, Texas and is the Theatre Critic for the North Dallas Gazette.