

Theatre 3 Presents *Look What's Happened to Pixie De Costa*

By Rick A. Elina

The instant you take your seat, in Theatre 3's basement space, Theatre Too, you wonder if maybe you haven't taken that wrong turn at Albuquerque and walked directly into a cartoon world. The vibrant colors of the set seem overly animated. You anticipate a guilty pleasure about to unfold and you allow yourself go with it. And it's a good thing you did.

Look What's Happened to Pixie De Costa, is one of those rare guilty pleasure's you'll forgive yourself for later. Think "What Ever Happened to Baby Jane" meets "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." After the final curtain, this will make total sense, but for now, let's just say it's a "Redd Herring." That was a clue, by the way.

In fact, Bruce R. Coleman writes that his influences in shaping this piece, both as playwright and director, come primarily from film noir and the aforementioned 1962 film starring Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. Thankfully, his work is true to the genre. The result is an enjoyable play that mixes slapstick with a dose of whodunit, topped off with huge portion of melodrama thrown in for good measure. It was nice being able to enjoy this type of production without having to dodge flying popcorn.

The play is about two sisters, Pixie and Margot De Costa who at an early age seemed destined for stardom. The crude and rude Pixie was the sister unashamedly favored by their overbearing father, while the kind-hearted and genteel Margot bore the constant brunt of his rejection. As adults, the competition continued as Pixie grew to personify arrogance, in contrast with Margot who exemplified elegance. Margot ultimately prevails reaching the heights of stardom while Pixie joins the D list starlets that populate tabloid news. When a horrible and mysterious accident befalls Margot, Pixie tries to revive her career in a manner befitting the truest of femme fatales.

Paul Taylor as the character "Redd Herring" never actually appears in the show, at least not until final curtain. Yet, Mr. Taylor bears a striking resemblance to Marjorie Keyes as Pixie. In fact, the same could be said of Evelyn Rambeaux as Pixie's sister, Margot. Just try to imagine Mr. Taylor in drag. Ms. Keyes and Ms. Rambeaux are able to deliver expressions that might otherwise be hidden away under layers of foundation, but the

actresses succeed remarkably. A single pouty pose from Mr. Taylor brings down the house in a round of roaring laughter.

The sisters don't get to have all the fun, though. Each of the supporting characters could easily steal scenes if not for Mr. Coleman's fine direction. Risking the wrath of the dysfunctional divas, the supporting actors are allowed to stretch their legs and grow their characters to a larger than life presence such that the confines of the small space are at times challenged. The result is a fly on the wall view for the audience.

Phyllis Cicero is comfortable in the caretaker role of Miss Viddy Johnson. Chad Peterson and Ted Wold, both playing multiple roles, switch characters with the ease of a wardrobe change. The best lines are reserved for Eddie Grant (Rick Espaillat) as a down on his luck, yet not all that desperate, screenwriter reminiscent of Joe Gillis from *Sunset Blvd.* And reminisce is what you'll spend a lot of time doing, during this show.

There's no doubt that the entire cast had fun. The same can be said of the audience as well.

Look What's Happened to Pixie De Costa runs through November 2, 2008. Visit www.Theatre3Dallas.com for more details.

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