

"Switch": a good reason to go back to the Embers

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BY MICHAEL S. REED

If you haven't yet done so, get your tickets now to *Switch*, the musical extravaganza playing at the Embers. Produced by Spread Eagle Productions, this musical review will delight, excite and move you.

The structure is simple and interesting. Three men — Terry Swenson, Tim Bowman and Kevin Koesel (the creator, director and moving force behind this gem) — decide to while away

the late evening hours in a deserted theater singing the songs that women always get to sing. And sing they do, with enthusiasm and panache.

The most notable performance comes from Terry Swenson as the sexy, whiskey-voiced cad, Roland Charles. His "Ladies Who Lunch" from Sondheim's *Company* is imbued with the right touch of bitterness and drive. He is arrogant, gifted and ultimately charming.

Tim Bowman as the kooky, blond and lovable Danny Boyd gives an energetic performance. What he lacks in stage experience is compensated for with his comic face and warm personality. He belts "Nobody Does It Like Me" from *Seesaw* triumphantly and without apology, as it should be. He shines. In "At the Ballet" from *A Chorus Line*, he allows himself to be vulnerable and his presence is warm and winning. Bowman's goofy, impudent and perfectly-coiffed portrayal of Danny Boyd is a pleasure to watch.

Although as a performer Koesel appears at times a little unsure, he has done a fine thing by creating this show. The storyline works well. It clips right along and is very entertaining. The characterizations are strong, the staging neat and crisp. "Big Spender" from *Sweet Charity* is audacious, bawdy, wicked and more fun than I've had in years. The savvy and careful selec-

tion of numbers will delight many a musical-theater fan. Koesel should be congratulated and, if this show is any indication of his wealth of talents, encouraged to create more musical reviews for our community.

It is unfortunate that the expense of live accompaniment forced these inventive entertainers to use taped accompaniment for their songs. Although the blasted technology gets trying at times, I found Joe Anderson's musical direction to be adept, skillful and lively.

Ann Harroun skillfully stitches the songs together with a good handle on subplots and characters. Her dialogue is campy, rude, interesting and funny.

This is a must-see show. It only runs through April 6, so call the Embers at 222-3082 and ask them to hold it over. For only \$6.50 a ticket, it's a fun, witty and gutsy Tuesday or Wednesday evening.

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