

CLIFF COLES



A Toe-Tapping Christmas

Willamette Rep's holiday production.

The Willamette Repertory Theatre presents *Chaps! A Jingle Jangle Christmas* — a toe-tapping, holiday hoe-down for the entire family. The action takes place in Studio B at the British Broadcasting Corporation. It's 15 minutes until airtime of a special Christmas radio broadcast in which American cowboy singing group Tex Riley and his Holiday Round-up is scheduled to appear in front of a live audience. However, the harmonizing cowboys are a no-show. Between bouts of asthmatic wheezing, Miles, the nervous show producer, is in a tizzy, while Leslie, the stoic, tea-sipping announcer who isn't keen on the whole cowboy phenomenon anyway, rather hopes the group doesn't come at all.

and his sidekick Aces; and Stan, the drunken sound effects guy, merely tries to keep pace.

Director and co-playwright of *Chaps!* Jahna Beecham has assembled a talented cast for the production. John Leistner's conversion from Archie to singing cowboy celeb Tex is both charming and convincing, and Ken Hof provides a bigger-than-life, John Wayne-ish element to his role as Diamond Jack. As Miles/Aces, Adam Goldthwaite's onstage antics and facial expressions are priceless, and watching Michael Fitzpatrick shed his stuffy British persona for the outrageously funny and over-the-top saloon floozy Jingle Belle is pure delight. Likewise, Sandra Sinnamon is simply captivating as Mabel.

A HOLIDAY HOE-DOWN FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY.

When Mabel, the group's manager, finally arrives alone with the costume trunk in tow and only minutes to spare, the crew realizes that the show must go on. With no rehearsal and only a script to follow, the Brits must improvise the tale of the Lonesome Rangers on a trail ride, and sing the popular cowboy movie songs of the era such as "I'm An Old Cowhand," "Back in the Saddle Again" and "Tumblin' Tumbleweeds" to convince the live audience that they are Tex Riley and company. Mabel steps in as cowboy sweethearts Polly/Molly. Archie takes the lead as Tex. Leslie, reluctantly, dons a pair of chaps and a derby; Clive, the radio ad pitchman, and Miles fill in as Jack Diamond

Her clear, harmonious vocals are impressive, particularly in her touching rendition of "White Cliffs of Dover," as well as in "I Want to be a Cowboy's Sweetheart," where she shows off her inimitable yodeling skills.

Accomplished cast members; an authentic set; catchy, nostalgic songs; showy costumes adorned with all manner of Christmas accoutrements; and the superb musical accompaniment of Sylvain DuPlant on bass and Chip Cohen on fiddle make this show the perfect segue into the festive holiday season.

Performance dates at the Hult Center's Soreng Theater are Dec. 1-4 and Dec. 8-11. For tickets, call the Hult Center box office at 682-5000 or visit www.hultcenter.org **ew**

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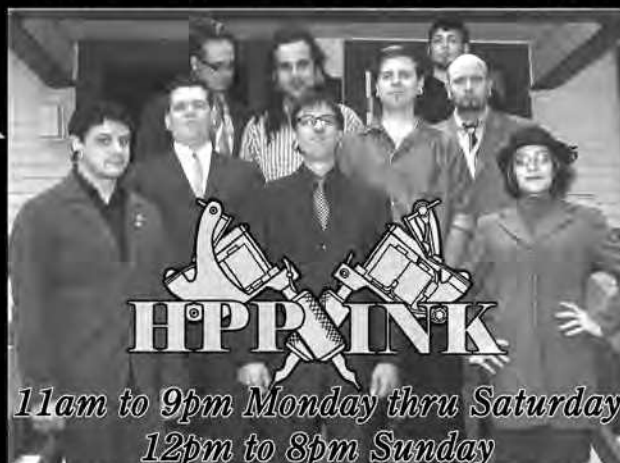
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