

The cast of *Trailer Park* belts it out



Let Loose for Lowbrow

Check your pretensions at the door

Actors Cabaret of Eugene opened its West Coast premiere of *The Great American Trailer Park Musical* on Friday, Aug. 31, to a packed and boisterous house. In a celebration of lowbrow style, many patrons explored their “inner kitsch,” showing up, in anticipation of the costume contest to be held during intermission, wearing a virtual smorgasbord of trailer park-inspired garments — from ratty hot pink and lime housecoats, faux leopard prints, gold lamé, lavender spandex, high heels and cut-offs with black stockings to feathery boas and oodles of costume jewelry.

If you take a wrong turn off Hwy. 301 in north Florida, you might end up on the wrong side of the tracks at the Armadillo Acres Trailer Park, where “Jerry Springer”-style conflict and crises besiege its hard luck inhabitants.

Residing in trailer #33 are Jeannie (Margaret Innocenti) and her toll collector husband Norbert (Don Kelley). Poor Norbert: All he wants to do is take his wife out to see the Ice Capades on their wedding anniversary, but Jeannie, who suffers from agoraphobia, hasn’t stepped outside of the trailer in 20 years — ever since her baby boy Elvis was kidnapped on the sidewalk in front of the local beauty salon.

A Greek chorus of trailer park denizens lays out the sad story for the audience through song and commentary. That chorus is composed of Betty (Michelle Sellers), the widowed trailer park manager with a buried secret, Lin (Laura Holden), the long suffering wife of a prison inmate on death row, and Pickles (Amanda Fackrell), a not-so-bright pubescent suffering from a hysterical pregnancy. Meanwhile, Pippi, a stripper at the Litterbox Show Palace, has moved into the trailer park, and Norbert and Pippi discover that they have something in common: They both collect dollar bills, one by one. But a perfect storm’s a brewin’ because Pippi’s mullet coiffed, road ragin’, permanent marker sniffin’, gun totin’, jealous ex-boyfriend Duke is on a homicidal mission to locate his hoochie coochie, husband stealin’ gal.

Whatever the play lacks in cultural refinement, it makes up for in the excellent

acting and vocal performances of the cast members. Margeret Innocenti gets high marks for her performance as the emotionally impaired but determined housewife Jeannie. Likewise, Don Kelley does a fantastic job as her hapless husband Norbert. Rebecca Teran dazzles as Pippi, the feisty, kitty-cat-like stripper with the heart of gold, and Mark Van Beever is both ominous and hilarious as her rampaging ex, Duke.

Of the three singing storytellers, Michelle Sellers packs a punch with her strong vocals and Laura Holden with her comedic flair, but Amanda Fackrell steals the show as Pickles. Fackrell’s squeaky voice and clueless disposition keep the audience in perpetual stitches.

The vocals are great, and the musical score features a potpourri of music genres, from soulful ballads to blues, rock, country and disco with show-stopping titles such as “This Side of the Tracks,” “Flushed Down the Pipes” and “Road Kill.”

The set designers also deserve recognition for their trailer park chic backdrop: Lawn gnomes, plastic pink flamingoes, tire rims and tacky patio chairs on the outside, and on the inside, an authentic macramé plant holder, needlepoint samplers, an American flag and, of course, a collection of fine glass figurines that “make a trailer a home.”

OK, so the big question is: Is it really OK to mock the trailer park crowd among us? I say yes, and here’s why: Sure, we chuckle at the business-in-the-front-party-in-the-back mullets and the beat up muscle cars, but we also sympathize with the plight of the characters. Even though we may dislike their choice of décor, their music or their tawdry garb, we can understand, empathize and even *like* these people. Blunt stereotypes force us to check our pretentiousness at the door because as humans, we are all susceptible to pain and heartache, and we all need a little love.

Is it slightly raunchy? Absolutely! Stereotypical? For sure! Entertaining? You betcha! You’ll laugh in spite of yourself. **EW**

Trailer Park runs Sept. 7, 8, 14, 15, and 21 and 22. Call 683-4368 for tix.

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