



The cast of *Hair*

40 Years of Love

Hair returns to the scene

Forty years after the musical opened on Broadway in 1968, Actors Cabaret of Eugene presents *Hair*, “the American tribal love-rock musical.”

I was 10 the year it opened, and all I knew was that I loved singing along to the catchy lyrics (*gleaming, steaming, flaxen, waxen, knotted, polka-dotted / twisted, beaded, braided, powdered, flowered and confettied*). I was introduced to the “groovy revolution” by way of my local AM radio station with the bubblegum pop version of “Hair,” sung by the wholesome family group The Cowsills. It was a far cry from Country Joe McDonald’s sardonic “Fixin’ to Die Rag” or Jimi Hendrix’s bitter evisceration of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” It would be years before I realized that growing your hair out all long and funky was merely a footnote to the show’s more controversial themes about racism, environmental destruction, poverty, sexism and sexual repression, the war in Vietnam and corruption in politics.

The plot in *Hair* is minimal — the “tribe,” a diverse group of politically active “Hippies of the Age of Aquarius” living a bohemian lifestyle in New York, challenges the social norms of the time. But the message is the music, and even though the clothes, the hair and the words may now seem overly idealistic — even quaint — the themes remain as powerful and relevant today as they were 40 years ago.

Director Michael P. Watkins has assembled a first-rate cast of young and energetic performers. Casting Chris McVein in the lead role as the tribe’s leader Claude, who gets drafted and ultimately ends up dying in Vietnam, was a judicious choice. McVein’s transformative vocal solos are phenomenal — from happy hippie in “I Got Life” to near Christ-like figure in army fatigues in the haunting “The Flesh Failures.” Tyler Holden is also ideally cast as the irreverent free spirit Berger. As Claude’s comedic foil, Holden captures the essence of the archetypal hippie, not only because he actually looks the part, but because he effortlessly draws the audience into the tribe’s inner circle, and with a wink invites them to the party. Colin Gray and Jermaine Golden contribute their talents, respectively as Woof, in love with Mick Jagger, but not gay; and Hud, militant black male and unofficial “president of the United States of love.”

Although he’s not one of the lead characters, Mark Van Beever deserves mention for his hilarious, over-the-top cameo performance as noted anthropologist Margaret Mead, who stumbles upon this new tribal “species.” Amid the heavy themes, Van Beever’s “operatic” solo is a high note of the show; in my opinion, no musical should be without at least one performer in drag.

The three female leads put in fabulous performances as well. Laura Holden plays Jeannie, in love with Claude,

but “knocked up by some crazy speed freak.” Her vocal performance of “Good Morning Starshine” is particularly terrific. As passionate protester and Berger’s love interest, Cate Wolfenbarger is splendid as the sensitive Sheila. Listening to her sing such songs as “I Believe in Love” and “Easy to Be Hard” with such conviction makes you want to get up right now and join the revolution; and Amanda Fackrell puts in a solid performance as Crissy. From her innocent rendition of “Frank Mills” to belting it out loud in “Abie Baby,” the girl can sing! As a team, the trio provides great harmonization in Supremes-like fashion for the delivery of the bluesy “Black Boys/White Boys.”

When the energetic and talented cast performed “Aquarius,” *Hair* and “Let The Sun Shine In” for the enthusiastic opening night crowd — some dressed in tie-dye and other groovy ‘60s garb — the place rocked. Kudos to the set and lighting designers, too. Although the set is minimal, a peace sign flag here, some Batik blankets there, it was effective, and the use of lighting to reflect the moods of the tribe was exceptional. Red, blue, green, white, yellow — spinning to illustrate when the tribe is tripping on LSD, softer light when a tribesmember was waxing philosophical.

It would be easy but unfair to speak of ACE’s production of *Hair* as a “Eugene thing.” The people who live here agree that hippies aren’t solely what define us as a city. But we do like our tie-dye and drum circles, so join the “be-in.” It’s pretty groovy. **EW**

Hair continues at ACE June 27-28, July 2, 3, 5 & 11-12. The show moves to the Hult July 18-20. Call 683-4368 for tix.

OSF Thumbnails

Three intrepid reviewers (Chuck Adams, Anna Grace and Suzi Steffen) popped down to Ashland to continue our quest for the perfect theatrical getaway. Watch for our special **Oregon Shakespeare Festival** issue on July 17, when we interview new Artistic Director Bill Rauch, tour the costume facilities and learn how to self-integrate with movement and fight director John Sipes — plus we’ll provide full-length reviews. In the meantime, we present short takes on the plays that have opened since we last were there (those reviews online in the March 27 archive at www.eugeneweekly.com and tix are available at www.osfashland.org):

• **A Comedy of Errors** (Elizabethan Stage)

Shakespeare’s confounding comedy is adapted into a rough-and-tumble musical Western that manages to be a madcap romp and, despite its overindulgences and low humor, an entertaining piece of ensemble work. — CA

• **Coriolanus** (New Theatre) A lone individual against the masses, Coriolanus (Danforth Comins) is a noble soldier whose thick head gets him in to deep trouble. Lots of guys yelling a lot with the occasional moment of pathos in the New Theatre’s intimate setting. — SS

• **The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler** (Bowmer Theatre) Pretty, witty, gay and hyper-referential, Coos Bay native Jeff Whitty’s tale of a quest for redefining identities combines Mammy from *Gone With the Wind*, the boys in the band and Hedda herself for a hilarious romp through fictional history, one that brings up real issues along the way. — AG

• **Othello** (Elizabethan Stage) Melodramatic to the hilt (so to speak), but the themes of racism, loyalty, jealousy, madness and murder come through mostly due to stunning performances all around and an Iago (Dan Donohue) who can use doublespeak with frightening ease. Make thy comparisons to current politics as you will. — CA

• **Our Town** (Elizabethan Stage) First time an American play hits the outdoor stage at the OSF is a half-success, with a strong Stage Manager (Anthony Heald) but a weak Emily Webb (Mahira Kakkar). The play’s trademark lack of set works well in Ashland’s pretty summer nights. — SS

One-Night Ship

Really, we couldn’t think this stuff up. We’re just going to quote from the press release because it’s so superbly bizarre: “Stars and Garters Theatre Co. presents **The Curse of The Goddamned Ship**, a bawdy vaudevilian musical complete with puppets, dark humor, burlesque, star lore and nautical glee. Live instruments include accordion, banjo, piano, percussive contraption, and slide guitar.” Hunh? Apparently, this involves lots of lusting after inanimate objects, stealing and incurring the wrath of the gods. Yeah! Well, whatever, the San Francisco troupe plays it up at Sam Bond’s at 9 pm Thursday, July 2. Tix are \$5, and you can’t beat a deal like that with a large wooden figurehead.





- 3 Stages, Including Hot Tub and Shower Stage
- Exclusive Champagne and VIP Rooms
- Extensive Beverage Selection
- Full Menu with Great Daily Specials
- Video Lottery & ATM

Open Mon - Sat 12 pm - 2:30 am • Sun 6 pm - 2:30 am
2620 W 10th Place • Eugene • 541-485-2303
Off W 11th Behind BMW Motorcycles



2727 Willamette
 Eugene, OR
 97405
 767-6816

Expires 7/15/08

Coupon does not apply to magazines. Must be 18 or older

25% off your purchase with this coupon

- ♥ Lingerie
- ♥ Gag Gifts
- ♥ Costumes
- ♥ Kama Sutra
- ♥ Sutra Toys
- ♥ EZ Whip
- ♥ 1000's of DVD's
- ♥ Massage Oils
- ♥ Bachelorette Party Gifts