

# Tragic Camp

University Theatre thrills with *Bat Boy*

**"H**eed the tale of a dirty little freak ... who is just like you!" the cross-dressing chorus intones with a solemn look in eye and a sturdy tongue in cheek. The *Weekly World News* character of *Bat Boy* is given life in this 1997 almost-a-cult-classic pop musical.

*Bat Boy: The Musical* is hysterical and great fun, but the script catches at an odd place. It is too deep to be frivolous, too campy to be serious. *Bat Boy* is at times deeply human and moving, at times diving for the cheap and easy trick. But that's what you get when you let Gen X write musicals: a play that can clearly show the influence of Sondheim, Euripides and *The Rocky Horror Show*.

This mix is going to hit a sweet spot for a number of local theatergoers, first and foremost being the students at the UO. This year there are a limited number of free tickets for UO students who show up at the theater between 7 and 7:30 pm. Director John Schmor couldn't have offered up a better choice for this portion of the audience. The stage hadn't been clamoring with actors for five minutes when they roll out the willful cross dressing, hokely-oakely portrayal of West Virginians at large – and an enormous bong.

For the erudite Eugenean who happens to stumble into the theater, there is still plenty to like. One can amuse one's self by ferreting out the significance of the myriad of creatures, mythological and otherwise, participating in the orgy led by a disco faun.

Did I mention this show is for ages 16 and up?

Overall the UO student performers uphold University Theater's reputation for excellence. Evan Marshall (*Bat Boy*) is a gifted performer, and you should take this opportunity to see him on stage before he flies off to greater opportunities. His performance has it all, emotional depth, timing, humor, a big voice and a legit British accent. Bravo.

Also engaging are Stephanie Hawkins as Meredith Parker and John Jeffrey as her syringe-wielding husband.

Music is generally strong, but so many songs are wordy and highly narrative. Articulation is key. Some of the actors can't quite wrap their mouths around them, leaving the audience straining to understand. The enthusiastic chorus easily makes up for the occasional mush mouth by solid commitment to the wacky truth of the script.

Anie Smith's costuming deserves a standing ovation in and of itself. From the simplicity of Mrs. Parker's housedresses to the aforementioned cross dressing to the fabulous light-up shoes the faun clips about in, this is a perfectly costumed show.

*Bat Boy* is an experience. Campy, crazy, tragic and magic, the evening flies by with the fierceness of a bat out of hell.

**EW**

*Bat Boy* plays through Nov. 19 at Robinson Theatre at the UO; times and tickets at [tickets.uoregon.edu](http://tickets.uoregon.edu) or 346.4363.





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