

'Beehive' throbs with gutsy girl-group music

JUKEBOX JAMBOREE TAKES OFF IN ACT TWO WITH FINE TRIBUTES TO JANIS, ARETHA, TINA

theaterreview

By Karen D'Souza
Mercury News

Stop! In the name of kitsch, before you break my heart.

San Jose Stage breaks out the bouffants with "Beehive," a bubbly '60s girl-group musical that starts out a little corny but ends up as the ultimate Boomer summer blow-out. This hit-parade revue swings from the sweet sounds of the Supremes to Janis Joplin's heart-rending rasp. From the conical Aquanet coiffures of the start of the decade to the flowing hippie locks of the Vietnam era, it's all about the hair, baby.

Created by Larry Gallagher, this jukebox musical sometimes tries too hard to chart history through greatest hits. Nostalgia may spark this groovy little trip down memory lane, but it's the mu-

sic that makes the production explode. Certainly, the candy-coated narration, which tries way too hard to teach us a lesson in sisterhood, gets a tad cheesy at times. But every time the show cuts the plucky chatter and sticks to the tunes, "Beehive" really buzzes.

Dial back the clock to a time when the hairstyles were tall, the skirts were short and the boots had to go-go (shagedelic costumes by Tommy G. Marquez). JFK was in the Oval Office. Sandra Dee got engaged to Bobby Darin. The Top 40 reflected the perky optimism of a nation that had not yet lost its innocence. Alas, that also means some of the bubble gum pop isn't all that memorable. For instance, the cutesy-poo oldie "The Name Game" lacks traction for those of us who weren't alive in the '60s. (Enough with the banana fanna already!)



DAVE LEPORE — SAN JOSE STAGE COMPANY

Diana Ross (Adrienne Muller, center) and the Supremes (Cheryl B. Scales, left, and Dawn L. Troupe) perform in "Beehive."

Tielle Baker tries her best to give Act One some heart (her "You Don't Own Me" is a standout), and director Rick Singleton keeps the pace buoyant, but it's not until the second act that the musical sizzles. That's when the Bea-

ties have landed, the civil rights movement has arrived, and "Beehive" throbs with songs that changed the beat of the culture forever.

Cheryl B. Scales sets it off with her red-hot Tina Turner tribute. She may not always

nail the powerhouse vocals of "Proud Mary," but Scales has spunk for days and she whirls her fringe dress like a helicopter's blades.

Halsey Varady stops the show with her rockin' jam on Janis Joplin. She scorches through "Piece of My Heart" and "Me and Bobby McGee" with a raw ferocity that makes the songs her own. Unlike some of the cast, she finds a way to act the songs as well as she sings them.

Dawn L. Troupe and Adrienne Muller maintain that intensity during the Aretha Franklin homage. They riff on "Natural Woman" and "Do Right Man" with a sincerity that begs us to hear the lyrics anew.

After three such searing sets, it's a bit of a comedown to return to the realm of hok-

"BEEHIVE"

Upspot: Bust out the hair spray! Big hair is back with a vengeance at San Jose Stage where the songs of the '60s sock it to us once more.

Where: San Jose Stage, 490 S. First St.

When: 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays, 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays through June 23.

Running time: Just under 2 hours, one intermission.

Tickets: \$25-\$50; (408) 283-7142 or www.sjstage.com.

ey with the dated ensemble number "Make Your Own Kind of Music." But no matter, these girls have already won our r-e-s-p-e-c-t.

Contact Karen D'Souza at kdsouza@mercurynews.com or (408) 271-3772.



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