

Hallelujah, it's a bum play, Baby

by Stevan Jovanovich

"Hallelujah Baby," playing at O'Keefe Centre, was a so-so musical comedy. It lasted one year on Broadway before going on the road. I think that the Broadway rendition (with different stars) must have had more polish than the production at the O'Keefe Centre.

The story is about a young negro girl, Georgina, played by Kim Weston, who has theatrical aspirations. Her friend, manager, and finally, suitor, Harvey, is played by Julius La Rosa. Clem, her colored lover completes the triangle and is played by Adam Wade.

The Girl Georgina is 25 years old throughout the entire play. There are six scenes from the 1900's to the 1960's in which attitudes towards the Negro are examined through the story of Georgina's rise to fame. The story is about the social emancipation of the negro.

It would seem we have the

makings of a good musical comedy; however, the production lacked colour (no pun) and vitality and had numerous technical flaws.

To begin with, the orchestra was far too loud or the voices were too weak. None of the songs, save one which was sung through a microphone, was clear. Although the words were unintelligible, the sounds that I heard were on key.

The sets for the show were never stunning or elaborate but usually adequate. The costuming was excellent, very colourful, apt and varied.

Lighting was good, but, once again, there was nothing special about it.

The acting and casting were OK. My main criticism is that Julius La Rosa and Adam Wade lacked depth. Julius La Rosa was a straight man. He might as well have read from the script. His acting was minimal.

Adam Wade as a civil rights leader was very unconvincing.

Kim Weston was delightful and Theresa Merritt as Mama was hilarious. It seemed that she was the only one who had actually developed a comic character from the script.

Music and lyrics were poor. None of the music, not even the theme song was catchy or memorable. The music was as shallow as most of the characters.

It was a musical comedy but none of the actors was a real comedian. The comedy rested mostly in the writing, not the delivery. The laughs were neither plentiful nor sustained.

The opening night performance seemed rushed. All in all, the show was a study in mediocrity. There was nothing really outstanding in music, lyrics, plot, acting, sets, lighting or costumes.

The loudness of the orchestra and the pacing of the show may be corrected after opening night but I don't think I'd want to see it again anyway.



John Mayall

by Pat Kutney

What happened in Detroit this past week-end? The Tigers won the World Series? COLD. The Cream at the Olympia? WARMER. John Mayall at the Grande Ballroom? BURNING. YES! John Mayall's performance reaffirmed my opinion that he is the best blues artist, white or black, alive today.

A great deal of hot air is expounded these days on the subject of supposedly 'true' blues groups 'going commercial' in order to make a reasonable living. It takes a strong will to resist the lure of big money. One man, however, who has steadfastly refused to prostitute his art for the sake of commercialism is John Mayall, founder, leader, and inspiration of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers.

Thirty-five years-old is a relatively old age for a popular musician to make it big, though Mayall didn't start until 1961. It has taken seven years of hard work and low-paying dates for him to make an inroad with the masses. Mayall's perseverance has paid off — his latest album, "Bare Wares", is his biggest seller yet.

Mayall "plays music because he likes it". He says that his music is "not marketed to fit people's needs." On the "Bare Wires" album all the material is written either by Mayall himself or by his guitarist, Mick Taylor. This represents a departure from his previous albums which included numbers by Robert Johnson, Albert King, and the like, as well as his own work.

From now on Mayall's albums will consist purely of original compositions by him and the rest of the group. Mayall said that "blues changes, if it stands still you haven't got music." This was in reply to my question of why they no longer did blues classics.

Mayall's guitarist, Mick Taylor, is one of the foremost exponents of blues guitar. Stephen Thompson, bass, and Colin Allen, drums, are not outstanding musicians, but are competent and have a "blues feel", something that is sadly lacking even in Howlin' Wolf's Band. Mayall no longer has his excellent horn section with him. They have formed their own group called "Coliseum". Mayall said his group will never consist of more than four again, and termed his period with horns as "progressive experimentation."

What can you say about a Mayall performance without using 5,000 superlatives? Mayall's playing was superb as was his singing. Though still not a proficient guitarist, he has greatly improved.

Who should show up at Mayall's concert? None other than Eric Clapton of the Cream. Under the entreaties of the audience he agreed to jam with Mayall. It was completely impromptu — Mayall made up lyrics as he went along. The group was at their high point of the evening.

The Cream will part company on Nov. 4th in New York, the date of their last performance. Ginger Baker, Jack Bruce and Clapton don't really know what they want to do yet. Clapton says you "can't decide before you do it." He would like to have a four piece group with a piano. When asked if he would attempt to get a unique sound with his next group, Clapton replied, "If you try to be unique it doesn't happen, it's the combination of musicians that makes the sound."

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