

# GREASED LIGHTNING HITS DUNN THEATRE

Grease  
—a musical by Jim Jacobs &  
Warren Casey

Review by Chris Morash

Ah, to be a teen-ager in the Fifties. Every guy was Jimmy Dean, ducktailed, leather-jacketed, had a Chevy with tail-fins and a girl with bobby-socks. Every radio was playing Buddy Holly and every night was passion-pit drive-in night. It was the Golden Age of North American youth.

Wanna bet?

One of the nice things about the musical *Grease*, being put on by Dal Theatre Productions in the Dunn Theatre until April 1, is that it doesn't take itself seriously. This is no misty-eyed ride down memory lane; nor is it a snide sneering look back. It simply says here's the myth of Fifties teenage life, let's have some fun with it.

Designer Robert Doyle captures this feeling visually; picture a white stage, draped in curtains covered with faded projected images of the Fifties, spotted with zillions of little records. The stage floor is covered with a huge record, onto which roll smaller discs providing the various sets.

Doyle creates his design with broad areas of bold colour—black, white and red, mostly—that are full of the brash optimism of the period. Yet he does this with a delightful sense of fun—most strongly felt in the wonderfully campy sets for the drive-in and Sandy's bedroom—that manages to parody without bitterness.

This same sense of humour and vitality fuels the work of director Brian McKay and choreographer Eric Emmanuele. Although things don't really kick into high gear until "Greased Lightnin'" in the fifth scene, you get a sense of manic energy burning beneath the entire show—an energy so strong that it makes everything else secondary, including the plot.

The result of this is that instead of having a play that deals with two main characters against a background of a group of characters, you get a sharp focus group portrait that treats all of its members as individuals.

Maintaining one's individuality while being the member of a group is a problem everyone has to grapple with, but is perhaps never more clear than in the clique dominated world of a high school; everyone in *Grease* belongs to some group—either the rah-rah-school-spirit crowd or one of two gangs.

Eric Emmanuele deals with this situation in his imaginative, explosive dance numbers, filling the stage with rich mosaics of bodies moving in unison, yet allowing each individual charac-

ter's personality to develop and express itself.

While this sort of wide angle focus might rob the play of a certain crisp definition, it gives many of the actors room for showcase performances. While it would take an entire *Gazette* to describe all of the nice moments and attention to detail that this strong cast put into the show, a few of the featured performers deserve special mention.

Andrew Cox plays Danny Zuko, the greaser who falls for the straight-laced Sandy Dumbrowski, with a strong inner intensity that gives depth to a character who is essentially a stereotype. Although more of an actor than a singer, Cox has such a firm grip on all the moves and vocal tricks of the rock-a-billy arsenal that his songs ("All Choked Up" comes to mind) hit the mark.

Sherrie Ford, in the role of Sandy Dumbrowski, presents a bit more of a problem when it comes to delivering a song. Her voice is not quite as strong as one would like it to be, although it is by no means poor and ends up sounding quite good with the accompaniment of John Hollis' top-notch band; what she may lack in vocal skill she more than makes up for in acting ability, creating a troubled, sympathetic character.

Scott Owen, who plays Kenickie, like Andrew Cox, makes up for the lack of a really strong voice by throwing himself into his songs, selling them with sheer energy. His Kenickie is the violent, strutting embodiment of greasy cool. To see him whipping around the stage in his beat-up convertible singing "Greased Lightnin'" is a good enough reason in itself to see *Grease*.

While Owen's Kenickie best captures the sex-and-violence-and-rock & roll lifestyle, it is Jennette White's Rizzo who bares the loneliness and frustration that fuels that lifestyle. White gives us the evening's musical high-point when her usually touch, acid-tongued character, thinking she's pregnant, sings "There Are Worse Things I Could Do"; White brings an interpretive honesty to her strong, soaring voice from deep within herself that makes hearing this song a powerful experience.

White's is not the only good voice, however; Doug Carrigan as Johnny Casino, Paul Smith as Doody, and Stephen Tobias as the Teen Angel all turn in solid, assured vocal performances.

No review of this production of *Grease* would be complete without a mention of John Jay's hilariously awkward Eugene; Jay's remarkably sure sense of comic timing makes this Chaplinesque misfit uproarious to watch;



It's really amazing what can grow out of just four little chords (C-Am-F-G(G7)) when they're planted in the frantic fervour of the fabulous Fifties. Dalhousie Theatre Productions are putting on *Grease* in the Sir James Dunn Auditorium until April 1. Be there or be square. (Photo: C. Cheung)

whether he's trying to dance, talk to a girl, or do just about anything, he's an endless source of delightful comic business.

Yet this sort of strength in a minor role is by no means exclu-

sive to Jay; Glenn White's Sonny, Sheldon Davis' Roger, Scott Burke's Vince Fontaine, Shanna Kelly's Cha-cha Di Gregorio and Sheri Haardeng-Pederson's Patty are all well shaped characters,

who, working together, give the show a wonderfully rich texture.

So catch *Grease* if you can; it may be a while before another show with this much vitality and fun comes along.

## Book on Nazi rambling, disjointed

*The Butcher of Lyon*  
by Brendan Murphy

Review by John Sharpe

This book is a chronicle of the life of Klaus Barbie, the infamous butcher of Lyon. Although occurring roughly forty years ago, this story has recently been brought back into public scrutiny. In February of 1983, Barbie was extradited by the Bolivian government, handed over to the French and quickly flown to France where he is today, in prison, awaiting trial.

In Murphy's book, Barbie is portrayed as a classic example of an 'SS' Gestapo officer. Fortunately for the world during the 40's, this is far from the truth. However, Barbie does allow the reader to study the mechanisms of German intelligence organizations like the Gestapo in occupied France during the war.

France, overthrown and conquered early in the war, lived through four years of German occupation. The country was divided into sectors. In one sector (roughly north France) most Jews were considered outlaws, while in the southern half of France Jews could obtain resi-

dence authorization, complete with a ration card. It all depended on the attitude of the local administrators, hence relatively minor officers like Barbie wielded fantastic power.

After France's shamefully poor defence of herself, the Vichy government took control during the occupation. Its leader, General Petain, the hero of Verdun in WW I, and his government adopted a policy of collaboration with the Nazis. The Vichy paramilitary force, the Milice, sent many Jews to their deaths. Thus it happened that Barbie (sent to Lyon to crush the underground resistance movement) accomplished so much because Frenchmen were betraying Frenchmen. This shameful smear on French history was culminated by the betrayal of Jean Moulin, the cornerstone of the resistance movement, who was beaten to death by Barbie.

After the war, Barbie formed an underground spy network consisting of former SS men. Next, he offered his services to the American intelligence operation in occupied Germany, the C.I.C., in exchange for protection. The spectre of Nazism was quickly eclipsed by that of com-

munist, so all the Allies were using former Nazis as spies to keep communism out of Germany. Barbie quickly learned the workings of the C.I.C. so thoroughly that he became a threat to them. They were afraid he might betray them to the communists, especially if he was arrested and tortured. So when France learned of his whereabouts, the Americans quickly sent him off to South America.

Barbie is now in a French prison. His trial might become a major scandal for many Frenchmen. His lawyer, Jacques Vergès, promises he will not reveal the names of French collaborators, some of whom have risen to prominence in postwar France, often on the strength of their Resistance credentials.

Murphy's book is a rambling, disjointed collection of odds and ends of Barbie's life. However, if nothing else, it shows what a phony and corrupt world really exists around us. How a man like Barbie (who by his own admission, enjoyed killing people) could survive, indeed thrive, in the highest circles of political intrigue for forty years is a testament to the corruption inherent in today's world.