



Sting takes a stab at Phil Collins in Neptune Theatre's Hamlet

Know when to hold 'em, when to fold 'em

The Gambler takes his revenge at Neptune

BY GREG MCFARLANE

Sting, Phil Collins and even Kenny Rogers.

Billy Idol was missing, but the cast that took the stage for Neptune's production of *Hamlet* still resembled the pantheon of 1980s country and pop hitmakers. Hamlet was played by a guy who looked remarkably like Sting (Tom Barnett); Hamlet's uncle, Claudius, was played by a Phil Collins wannabe (Nigel Bennett); Hamlet's mother was Bette Midler (Nicola Lipman); and the Gambler himself, Kenny Rogers (Lee J. Campbell), played the ghost of Hamlet's dead father. Even the lead singer from Midnight Oil showed up to play Polonius (Andrew Scorer).

And in what appears to be a 1920s setting, this all takes place. The epic story — son loses father, son finds out his uncle killed his father; son exacts revenge on uncle — doesn't change, though. Hamlet does pay for his vengeance, being struck dead by the sword of Michael

Damian, or should I say Laertes (Raoul Bhaneja).

The acting, for the most part, is commendable. Barnett is noteworthy as Hamlet. He plays the part with a hint of lunacy in his eye, and nowhere does that lunacy take command more than when he liberally gropes Ophelia, played wonderfully by a Debbie Gibson lookalike (Patricia Zentilli). It was this vicious rubdown that actually awoke my friend and viewing partner from an appreciated slumber, which was brought about by the digestion of the sandwich he bought from Subway during the intermission.

He missed more decent acting, too. Bennett is weaselly as Claudius, and Christopher Shore and Geoff McBride are appropriate as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, portrayed as two prep school kiss-ass goof balls — too stupid to deceive Hamlet, but smart enough to try to, if only for the favour of a king.

But, with the switch to 1920s garb (hey, again, I'm only speculat-

ing on the era), the play lost some historical accuracy. First, Michael Damian killing Sting makes no sense. Damian sucked. He always did. There's no way he could kill Sting, who although shitty now, was excellent while with the Police. And the Midnight Oil guy working in tandem with Phil Collins? Self-righteous indignation never mixes with sappy studio pop, even with the common interest of sedating Hamlet at stake.

However, the production rectifies itself at the end, when the Midnight Oil guy, Michael Damian, Sting and Phil Collins are killed — because that is the state of their current music/entertainment careers: lifeless corpses lying on the floor.

But the ghost of Kenny Rogers still stalks the night. Maybe he's pissed off that the whole Roasters thing went awry but, at least in this production of *Hamlet*, he gets his revenge.

Now if he could only do something about Michael Bolton...

Going (To) The Whole Nine Yards

BY MARK EVANS

The Whole Nine Yards is one of those movies that's much funnier than it deserves to be — although that being said it still doesn't deserve much.

The chances of this film racking up the \$200 million-plus grosses of Bruce Willis' last two movies (*Armageddon*, *The Sixth Sense*) are as good as your chances of seeing the Pope host a Protestant fundraiser.

Bruce Willis hasn't starred in a comedy since *North* — and lord knows that he shouldn't be doing any more based on its box office performance — but he is still a popular actor, although whether that popularity can carry this film is debatable.

The plot in a nutshell involves Willis playing Jimmy "The Tulip" Tudeski, a contract killer on the run from the mob who moves next door to Nick "Oz" Oseransky (Matthew Perry), a dentist who is tied down to a domineering French wife (Rosanna Arquette) and a terrible accent. Oz wants to get a divorce, but can't due to a massive debt incurred by his father-in-law.

Things aren't quite as cut and dried as the synopsis would suggest, and there are a few clever turns to the script. Most of the plot works best if left as a surprise, so instead I'll concentrate on the actors and their performances — or lack thereof.

First off, the good. Michael Clarke Duncan proves that his work in *The Green Mile* was not a one-time accident. Playing a 'colleague' of Jimmy's named Frankie, he's the most complex character in the film and gets some of the movie's better laughs — and it doesn't hurt that his voice is just plain cool to listen to.

Jill, Oz's assistant, is played by Amanda Peet, and her role is

equally as entertaining as Frankie's. Most of what happens to her character tends to be as predictable as the movie. But, there's some very clever work later on that makes up for these mis-steps.

Matthew Perry, however, seems incapable of playing anything beyond variations on his character from *Friends*. Sure that's all that's being asked of him here, but that doesn't excuse the fact that people pay to see something other than what they're getting for free (?) on television. His paranoid, wishy-washy character is hardly even interesting. Then, just when he looks about to turn from that style, he goes straight back into it.

Bruce Willis looks like he's just phoning this one in, getting his chance to deliver some of the cheesiest and mawkkiest lines in the film. To call him wasted here as some mob figure who's devoid of any real personality would be letting him off light. Having a poorly

written character is bad enough, having him as the main character and then doing nothing with him is worse.

Uneven is a good way to describe this script. About half the dialogue is funny or at least worth a chuckle, the other half is pointless and inane — a needless mobster character done by Kevin Pollak illustrates this perfectly.

Some of the physical humor is funny, but a lot of it is insipid. Trying to think of more than a handful of funny bits after the movie's ended is more difficult than it ought to be for a supposed comedy.

Bottom Line: Since the funny outdoes the unfunny by just a little margin, I'll give this movie a recommendation by just a little margin. Two and a half stars. The movie seems to be shooting for mediocrity and hits it square on. If you want a true black comedy go rent *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb*.

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