

## GREASE

Book, Music and Lyrics by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey

Broadway across America

Chrysler Hall

Sept. 29, 2009-Oct. 4

For tickets call: 1-800-3000

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

"Grease" began in 1970 in a trolley barn converted into a theatre in Chicago's tough north side. It proved to be the little musical that could, and a whole lot more. It's never stopped running somewhere in the world and the movie version became the highest grossing motion picture musical of all time.

I have seen it on several occasions over the 40 years that it has been around. It has undergone revisions and changes with the passing of time to accommodate the ever evolving tastes and styles of Broadway. The changes have not all been for the better. Some months ago Jesse Green wrote a keenly perceptive article in "New York Magazine." In the piece he looked at what is ailing many of the current musicals. Titled "The Triumph of Bombast", Mr. Green says the "disease: is called emphasitis. Some of the symptoms such as painfully loud sound design have been developing for years. The main cause of the affliction is talented people over doing everything. The problem of overstating in direction, choreography, design, and sound has also spread to performance, to the acting in musicals.

In this production of "Grease", with a couple of exceptions, everyone is a caricature of a caricature... In other words, the characters of the work were delightful stereotypes as originally written. As performed here, they lack definition. It's all a great wash as we move from one song to another without meaning or excitement. As directed. by Kathleen Marshall this cast over does everything. If one pelvic thrust is funny, they do six. If one crotch grab is amusing why not do five more? Many of the women resort to playing the ultra trite Broadway bimbo that we have seen far too many times. They dance and sing well enough but when they speak you miss a lot of words. Let that poor dumb blond rest in peace.

For some reason, a five minute warm-up of the audience took place as if we were in a TV studio. The cities of Hampton Roads were named and people screamed when their home town was mentioned. Pungo was referred to a lot. A local cheer leading team was brought in to jazz things up.

Kathleen Marshall has done some exciting staging amidst the excess of exaggerated riches. Still the show seemed rushed which made us feel we were seeing the same things over and over. Lighting by Kenneth Posner was effective and Derek McLane's scenery functioned efficiently. Let me make clear that the predominantly young audience had a screamingly, really grand time. I liked the fact that they did...

That warm up was to let us know that we were there to have fun. And I always have enjoyed other productions of this record breaking musical theatre gem. This time, though, it seemed a very long, repetitive two hours or more.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.