

Grease hits the mark with GWU

GREASE REVIEW

Miriam Coles
Pilot staff

Pink Poodle skirts, hair teased till it stands on end, petal pushers with black leather patches, tight T-shirts with the sleeves neatly rolled. Remember those bygone years of the Fifties when rock and roll was the hottest thing and all everyone thought about was sex? Those were the days.

Actually, most of us have no recollection of what took place during those classic years, however, we have all been shaped by our culture's view of that time. *Grease*, the ever popular musical that refuses to grow old, provides a look at the fifties as we imagine them; when rebels ruled and morality was out. The days when Elvis "the pelvis" rocked America. Those were definitely the days.

As for the storyline, let me see if I understand this correctly. To get the man of my dreams, I have to throw away all of my moral standards, give up my convictions, and basically become a slut. Meanwhile, he doesn't have to change in the least for me. It all makes sense now! Hmmm... or not.

Needless to say, I wasn't nearly as impressed with the moral message of *Grease* as I was with the actors themselves.

In my humble opinion, GWU's performance was wonderfully entertaining. So many elements of the show were great, from the singing right down to the real '49 Oldsmobile they brought out on stage. The cast and crew all pulled together to put on a terrific show.

As the five-piece band serenaded the audience with good time oldies, I knew I was going to enjoy the show. By the time the program got ready to start, the whole audience was singing along

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Production a big hit, adds performance

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Michael Brooks, who played Kenikie, Betty Rizzo's rebellious lover, expressed it this way: "It's a high energy time warp. Through singing and dancing, *Grease* opens up our imaginations and allows us all to drift back into the 50's and get a taste of the days of Buddy Holly and slicked hair.

"Even though we live in the high paced world of 1999, through our parents, we all have roots in the 50's. We're forever connected," said Brooks.

That connection was evident in the community's response to Gardner-Webb's production of *Grease*. According to director Keith Cassidy, the auditorium was packed every night. In fact, 20 people were turned away on Friday night because there were no seats left so the show was held over to Tuesday.

It wasn't always a fun, glamorous ride. The cast has been troubled with injury and sickness. Jeremy Burger, the main character Danny Zuko, was having voice trouble on Monday night, and during the Sunday matinee, Nataly Beville fell during a dance sequence and was taken to the hospital.

By Monday night, the cast was physically exhausted. One cast member said, "Backstage, we're exhausted, but once we get out on stage, the energy all comes rushing back."

"I really feel it's only been through the provisions of God that we've been able to do this. There have been so many difficulties," said Kelly Greene who played Marty. "I think that even though it's not a sacred play, God has chosen to reward the faith of the cast and crew with such phenomenal success."

Director Keith Cassidy decided to use hand-held microphones instead of a more advanced sound system. He explained that if you look at how the play, not the movie, was originally structured you can see that it's more of a rock concert than a musical. Instead

of the music backing up the story line, the story serves as a frame for the music.

"I wanted to highlight the music," said Cassidy. In addition, several cast members said that because they used the big hand-held mikes for the origi-

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nal play, it looks more authentic.

"They [the mikes] took a tremendous amount of work, extra time and practice," said Greene. Denise Deaton, who played Jan, said that "they had to be re-wound after every scene." But with a lot of determination and hard work, the cast seemed to manage fine.

The band itself was a constant throughout the show. Elizabeth Aldridge, Scott Elliot, Robbie Freeman, Obbie Clayton and Darin Deaton, all of whom had never played together before, performed the entire musical score as well as several songs before the show got underway.

"It was hard because we had to learn the whole thing from scratch," said Elliot. "Most of the songs for the pre-show we didn't have any music for. They were basically improvisations."

"It was great to see the audience singing along. It means we reached them," said Saxophonist Aldridge.

The band also reached the point of exhaustion. Elliot commented, "While I'm not tired of the show, the whole

thing does get tiring and frustrating. I, for one, am ready to sleep decent hours. I work at Burger King until 3:00 am after this, so I'm a little worn out."

The cast was unanimous in their description of the best element of the whole produc-

tion. When asked if anyone had anything else they would like to add, Deaton emphatically exclaimed, "No matter how talented the cast is, none of this would have happened without the director, Keith Cassidy. He is absolutely the greatest."

Grease was definitely one of the most successful plays in GWU theater history. With its still in Cassidy's mind, more productions are in the works. Auditions for *Amedaus* are scheduled for shortly after spring break.

Next year, the theater is planning to perform *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, *Godspell*, and *A Few Good Men*, along with one other small play. If the response to these productions is anything like that of *Grease*, the theater department can plan on a bright future next semester.

Ryan Stamey said, in the words of the *Grease* generation, "Audiences love us cause they can dig it, baby."

Deaton summed it all up. "It's *Grease*. That's all that needs to be said."

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