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The Players.

It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues

A decade ago, "It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues" took the theater world by storm. The first Broadway show of the legendary New Jersey-based Crossroads Theatre Company, "It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues" earned four Tony nominations in 1999, including the coveted Best Musical.

It was major for the show, considering that it's not a musical in the traditional Broadway sense.

In a nutshell, "It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues" is a marvelous story of the history of the blues. Video screens project images from the painful past of blacks in this country. The images are intended to convey why the blues is inherent in black folks. The music, and the talented men and women who perform it, are the stars of "It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues."

Dialogue is minimum - although performers do give some background of each song they perform. The performances, which include classics from composer/musicians like Jimmie Rodgers, W.C. Handy, Robert L. Johnson and even Hank Williams Sr., do all the talking.

"It Ain't Nothin' but the Blues" is written by Charles Bevel, Lita Gaithers, Randal Myler, Dan Wheatman and Ron Taylor, who originated the idea and got to see its success before passing away in 2002. Some of the writers perform the dozens of songs in the musical, including the incomparable Bevel, who insists that the

blues is not just African-American music, but America's soundtrack.

"The Blues does not mean black music. It means having the courage or audacity to speak to what is in your heart ...

That human attribute is colorless ...," Bevel said. "Its African roots cannot be denied, but most of its energy ... (is) acquired from a people being forced to continuously live on the outer edges of the majority culture in America."

Located 31 miles outside of New York City, New Brunswick, N.J., has been home to the Crossroads Theatre Company since it was founded in 1978 by Ricardo Khan and L. Kenneth Richardson. Crossroads has produced more than 100 works, many starring some of the world's best-known African-American talent - people like Avery Brooks, Olu Dara, Ruby Dee, Micki Grant, Leslie Lee, Denise Nicholas, Ntozake Shange, Anne Deveare Smith and George C. Wolfe.

In 1999, the Crossroads Theatre Company won the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in America. Ironically a year later, the Company briefly shut its doors in 2000 amid financial troubles. It reopened two years later and has been going strong ever since.

**Aug. 6 at 8 p.m.
Aug. 7 at 3 & 8 p.m.
Aug. 8 at 3 & 8 p.m.
at Reynolds
Auditorium**

Ticket Price: \$42