

BROADWAY BOUND & GAGGED REVIEW

To be posted on AZROCKY.COM later this week

To all Rocky Horror Fans out there,

As most of you are probably aware, right now Phoenix's Nearly Naked Theatre Company is staging a production of Richard O'Brien's ORIGINAL stage play THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW upon which that film we all love is based. This is the fourth time the play has been done in the Valley since 1987, and the third production I've personally seen.

Perhaps like some of you, I'd had some reservations based on things I'd heard, and I was a bit skeptical about it beforehand (though I have to say we've been in touch with them since their early planning stages and they've been NOTHING but friendly and supportive, and we've done cross promotion with them as well). But then I began to hear positive, favourable reviews, and I began to look more and more forward to seeing it. I attended for the first time last night (Friday, September 3rd), with friends and fellow ROCKY veterans Alex Moore and James Norman (and BB&G newbie Laddie Van Kelt), and...

I was blown away. It was FANTASTIC.

To be sure, it takes liberties in many areas (in some cases, taking a RADICALLY different approach to the characters than the film does), and in other areas (such as Dion Johnson's UBER-geeky Brad, which takes the "square" to an appropriately caricaturish extreme), it's absolutely pure and traditional. But the combination WORKS. The performances, the sets, the costumes, the design (particularly the color schemes), the pacing and ESPECIALLY the music are first rate, top notch, and above all, PROFESSIONAL. It's fast, fun and FUNNY in a way the film often ISN'T...and it's that way WITHOUT much audience participation! (Which they reserve for their Saturday night shows.) And I have to make a note about the band, who were tight and ON IT in every way. Also, all of the performers had excellent voices, particularly Traci McCormick's Janet; who along with the Columbia, Brandi Rose Bigley, were, dare I say, MIGHTY easy on the eyes; while you girls (and those boys who like boys) will quite like the Riff (Damon Bolling) and Rocky (Slade Hall)! But then, everyone in the cast is appealing in their own way.

And what can I say about Damon Dering's Frank? NOTHING like Tim Curry, but played as a straight (ahem), comic drag queen--somewhere between Harvey Fierstein and Divine, as my friend Al-X put it, campy/overdramatic in the extreme and FUNNY AS HELL. I can also single out David Weiss as the Narrator/Crim for his "G-Man" take on the role. However, hands down, the best part of the show for ME were the "Phantoms"....their closest equivalent in the film and our show is the Transylvanians, but not quite: the Phantoms are just...DIFFERENT. Dressed in black, form fitting, Greco-Roman robes with frilly sleeves, and sadfaced makeup, they are visually striking, moved exceptionally well, and each had a distinctive personality. They're elements, props, background extras, set pieces, and backup singers, and added SO much to the atmosphere of the piece. If there were nothing else to recommend the show, the Phantoms alone would be worth your time and money.

It also bears noting that the production has SEVERAL connections to Broadway Bound & Gagged's earliest past. Damon, and two of their Phantoms, Tracy Payne and Terre Steed, were all

part of the Westridge Mall Rocky Horror cauldron circa 1989-91 from whence BB&G was born (see the HISTORY section of www.AZROCKY.com), Terre having been the first Frank to perform with the cast after it was christened with that name (thought the cast's roots go back a few years earlier, which is when I started there) as well as the first Frank when the cast transferred to Tempe's Valley Art circa 92-93. And another phantom, Romeo Green, performed with us several times back in the Tempe Cinemas days. (Always wondered whatever happened to him....now I know!) Damon is the artistic director at NNT and this production marked the realization of a longtime dream for him and Terre, so kudos to them both.

So please, take it from someone who's been at the ROCKY game for a LONG time, who's seen several productions of the play, who's seen the film shadowcast in multiple theatres, cities and states, who's studied the origins and early days of the film AND play and all the subsequent history, and who's met the creators of both...set your reservations aside. If you are a ROCKY HORROR fan, this production is MORE than worth your time, and if you open your mind to it, and let it take you on its own journey, seeing this whole new perspective on ROCKY just might make you go back to the film with renewed appreciation for the piece, as a whole. Which is the best that a work of art can offer when it is open to multiple interpretations, yet one version is considered "definitive".

Yes, it's a bit pricier than going to see our productions of the film in Phoenix or Chandler. And yes, if you want to see their audience participation shows (Saturdays at 10pm, though "light" verbal participation and Timewarp dancing are acceptable at all shows), you'd have to miss the preshow (at least) of our show. BUT...it's well worth it, as despite its visual deviations (and what would ROCKY be without deviations?), it captures the innocence, joy and wonder of the first productions. And that alone is worth the price of admission. Even if Eddie (J.C. Carlisle) doesn't come out of a Coke Machine.

Go see it while you can. Who knows when it'll come around the Valley again????

It is being performed through September 18th as follows:

Thurs-Sat at 8pm, Sundays at 2pm & 7pm, audience participation shows Saturdays at 10:30pm

At the Little Theatre at Phoenix Theatre, 100 East McDowell Rd

Call 602 274 2432 for more information

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"The Darkness must go down the River of Night's Dreaming, flow, Morphia slow, let the Sun and Light come streaming into my life..."