



# Total Theater<sup>SM</sup>

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## CRITICOPIA REGIONAL THEATER

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**Show Title**                    It Ain't Nothin' But The Blues

**Subtitle**

**Total Rating**                \*\*\*1/2

**Currently Running?**    NO

**Dates**                        Opened October 4, 2004; Ended December 3, 2004

**Country**                     USA

**State**                         Florida

**City/Town**                 Sarasota

**Theater Type**                Regional

**Producer/Theater Co.**      Florida Studio Theater (Richard Hopkins, artistic dir)

**Theater**                        Florida Studio Theater - Keating Mainstage

**Theater Address**          1241 North Palm Avenue

**Box Office Phone**        (941) 366-9000

**Running Time**              2 hrs

**Genre**                         Musical Revue

**Author**                        Written by Charles Bevel, Lita Gaithers, Randal Myer, Ron Taylor & Dan Wheatman, based on an idea by Taylor

**Director** Dennis Courtney

**Review** Without a traditional kind of book, *It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues* nonetheless speaks eloquently to blues history and tradition. Vocalists act out their lyrics, mime emotions, dance, instrumentalize as historical projections back their tales and wails. Progress from African tribal music through slave singing all the way to country western and Chicago-style blues shows how strongly the roots of blues were planted, its seedlings transplanted and cross-fertilized. Solidly, like the wooden set, furnishings, and such props as large sticks used in African rituals that become bats to keep slaves in line, the performers settle into "Living With the Blues." So distinctive and apropos is each performance, every song or set, it's difficult to point out a typical few, but here goes:  
Pining aplenty in Jolet Harris' "St. Louis Blues," and power acknowledging redemption in "I Know I've Been Changed." Jannie Jones' sizzling, suggestive "My Man Rocks Me" and forceful, defiant "Someone Else Is Steppin' In" reinforced — despite pain— by her "I Put a Spell on You." Naturally pixiesque Forrest Richards demonstrating another side of nature with "Now I'm Gonna Be Bad" and heating up the house with "Fever." Playing guitar and banjo as well as singing, Jon Rosen spelling out "T for Texas," honky-tonking "Mind Your Own Business," going country with "Candy Man Blues." Sexy Jim Weaver leaving no doubt he's both a "Blues Man" and (dirty dancing with Forrest) "Hoochie Coochie Man" yet spiritually motivating with "Child of the Most High King" and "Children Your Line Is Draggin'." Jim teaming up with "Walking Blues" expert Richie McCall to celebrate being in "Sweet Home Chicago." Richie crooning "I Can't Stop Loving You," backed by the humming women. A capella arrangements that make songs seem accompanied by a sizable band.  
A lighted silhouette of city skyscrapers and musicians appearing upstage center after intermission locates more recent codified, often citified blues, as do the rhinestone-dripping women's deep-colored, silky formals and the men's flashy shirts and ties. Everything blends beautifully, proving Dennis Courtney a true mix master.

**Caution/Guidance**

**Other Critics**

**Miscellaneous**

**Awards**

**Cast** Jolet Harris, Jannie Jones, Richie McCall, Forrest Richards, Jon Rosen, Jim Weaver; Musicians: Howard Folta, Linda Hudes, Bill O'Hara, Michael Sebastian

**Technical Staff** Set: Robin Sanford Roberts; Costumes: Marcella Beckwith (also Set adapter); Lights: Ethan Kaplan; Prod. Stage Mgr: Jill Zakrzewski

**Critic** Kilker, Marie J.

**Date Reviewed** October 2004