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'One Hit' is a hit for FST

Every time I go to Florida Studio Theatre's Goldstein Cabaret in Sarasota, I marvel at how much talent can be packed on that little stage.

The current show, "One Hit Wonders," is yet another example. Entertainment oozes from the stage into every corner of that intimate space.

Developed at FST by Richard Hopkins, Dennis Courtney, William Myers, Jim Prosser and Michael Sebastian, "One Hit Wonders" features FST veterans Julia Cardia, Jannie Jones and Jim Weaver with Gary Linemann making his FST debut.

With Sebastian on piano, the four singers segue through some of the top music of the past 50 years, blending such singular hits as "Our House," "Leader of the Pack," "Harper Valley PTA," "Purple People Eater" and "Limbo Rock" into slices of "American Pie," the only No. 1 hit by Don McLean.

Since the full version of "American Pie" would have nearly filled this show's first act, this was a clever way to pay homage to that classic.

These songs hit the charts for all manner of reasons, defining pop culture along the way, as audiences danced the Mashed Potato, Locomotion and the Macarena. Chubby Checkers' twist songs are not in this show because more than one made the top rungs of the chart, disqualifying Checkers from one-hit wonder status.

Sunday night, when I was at the Cabaret, every one of these tunes hit the charts again -- thanks to the awesome talent of the cast.

Cardia sparkles when she sings, throws her whole body into her dancing and gave her all to the Jeannie C. Reilly hit, "Harper Valley PTA." But then she gave her all to every song, even when she was at the back of the stage as a back-up singer.

So did Jannie Jones whose rendition of "Me and Bobby McGee" was part Janis Joplin, part spiritual and all sensational. Her rendition of "The Rose" was nearly a show-stopper.

Weaver opened the show with the first slice of "Pie." Whether alone or in duets or group numbers, he is as much an actor as a singer and dancer, mugging and using body language to wring the most from every piece in the show. For "Stripper," he went a little farther, always with a twinkle in his eye.

Completing the ensemble of singers for this show is FST newcomer Gary Lindemann. He fit in with no trouble at all, prancing across the stage as needed for "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer," nearly duplicating the sound of Bobby Picket on "Monster Mash" and blending beautifully with the others on "MacArthur Park."

Sebastian did what he always does -- provides the perfect musical setting with his fingers on the keyboard.

Jeffrey Dillon's lighting, Marcella Beckwith's costumes and Courtney's choreography and direction served as the bonding agents for another great FST musical production.

"One-Hit Wonders" will continue in the Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., through May 29. Tickets are \$18-\$22 per person. Performances are Tuesdays at 6 p.m., Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays at 6 and 9 p.m. and Sundays at 2 and 7:30 p.m.

Currently playing on the FST Keating Mainstage is "The Bully Pulpit." For tickets to either show, call 366-9000.

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By Kim Cool

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