

Entertainment Outlook

Female version of hit play The Odd Couple

THE BARRIS BEA FUN OF IT, I recently tried a rather unusual experiment - visiting, barely a week apart, two similar entertainment palaces (dinner theatres, to be precise) that are geographically separated by

about 2,000 miles, give or take a pit stop.

The first was the well-known Burt Reynolds Jupiter Theatre, at Jupiter, Florida, some 25 miles up the Atlantic coast from Palm Beach. The second was the relatively new Stage West at Mississauga, Ontario, just past the western boundaries of Toronto.

The Burt Reynolds Jupiter Theatre has been operating successfully for about a decade. Although the famous movie star whose name it pan out and was closed.)

In Jupiter, Florida, I saw a 1960s musical revue called *Beehive*, a fluffy item with a cast of six singers (all female) and a six-piece rock band on the stage behind the singers. At Stage West, the attraction was the female version of Neil Simon's comedy, *The Odd Couple*, with Sandy Dennis and Stella Stevens as the stars.

way of imaginative choreography or set design.

The design is straight-forward enough.

The stage is framed by indications of a huge juke box, and all the musicians and singers perform inside its borders.

The songs include *It's My Party*, *Where The Boys Are*, *The Beat Goes On*, *To Sir With Love*, *Proud Mary*, *A Fool In Love*, *Me and Bobby McGee*, *The Name Game*, *She's A Fool*, *You Don't Own Me*, *Downtown*, *Make Your Own Kind Of Music*, and many more baby-boomer bonanzas.

There's nothing particularly wrong with these songs or the other ones in *Beehive*. What's wrong is what's missing. How does one "cover" the music of the 1960s with nary a nod to the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Beach Boys or Bob Dylan?

Perhaps the error was in casting all women, rather than having a mixed cast. So many of the 1960s songs were boys' (or, if you like, men's) songs and thus inappropriate for women. Perhaps the rights to some of those songs were unavailable. Whatever the reason, the imbalance is a glaring one. Come to think of it, had they used a mixed cast, the title may have been unusable. *Beehive* refers to the women's hair style of that time.

The other aspect of the visit to the Burt Reynolds emporium that went against the grain was the matter of house rules. One has become accustomed, of course, to the prohibition against smoking during performances at dinner theatres, as well as to the serving of drinks during the actual show. But at the Burt Reynolds Jupiter Theatre, you must finish your drink and all glasses must be removed from the table before the show even starts. In addition, if you want a drink during the intermission, you must order it before the beginning of the first act.

I asked our waitress why this was so

and she smiled and said, "That's the way Burt wants it. He doesn't want a lot of tinkling glasses during the performance."

ing to say one thing and then interrupting herself in mid-thought, makes her the star attraction in this production.

The rest of the cast is effective, too, especially Damon Redfern and Anthony Bekenn, who play two Spanish brothers (replacing the two women with whom Oscar and Felix had a date in the original version) in appropriately broad fashion.

The price range at both the Jupiter Theatre and Stage West is not unreasonable. Our seats at the Jupiter were \$37.50 (U.S.) for dinner and the show. At Stage West, prices range from \$28.50 to \$38.00, depending on the night of the week. Drinks, in both places, are extra.

Both rooms are attractive, but Stage West seems to me a bit less glibly. Certainly, *The Odd Couple* is better dinner theatre fare than *Beehive*, but I've no doubt the Jupiter Theatre at other times offers equally satisfying productions.

My biggest problem at the Jupiter were those silly restrictions about clearing away the glasses and ordering intermission drinks an hour before you want them. Stage West inflicts no such nonsense on its patrons.

Ironically, the Stage West theatre in Edmonton (at the Mayfield Inn) burned to the ground late in February

— just as construction was under way to expand its capacity. But Howard Pechel, the executive producer for all three Stage West locations, vows that it will be rebuilt and will reopen within six months.

In the meantime, I welcome the expansion of the Stage West empire to the Toronto area.

No free ice

There'll be no free ice time at the Acton Arena for the Rotary Club Skate-a-Thon, council decided Monday night.

A letter from the Rotary Club's Eric Sellers asked for free ice time March 29, from noon to 3 p.m.

Coun. Gerald Rennie's motion to waive the \$174 charge for ice time was lost.

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