

Original Musical Premieres at UNLV

By Jennifer Evans
Staff A & E Writer

The sensational music of four-time Academy Award winner Johnny Mercer echoed through Judy Bayley Theatre last week.

From the Jan. 24 opening night of *And the Angels Sing: A tribute to Johnny Mercer*, to the closing curtain Jan. 28, Department of Theatre Arts students dazzled audiences with their excellent acting and singing.

The original musical, chronicling the life of the legendary Mercer, begins on the river banks of Savannah, Ga., the musician's childhood home. The curtain opens to a dimly lit stage, with a spotlight enveloping Andrew Mueller, who portrays the young Mercer and Todd Horman,

playing the adult Mercer. Together, they sing, "There is Such a Lot of World to See."

Horman is then featured with Elizabeth Brownlee in "From this Day I Walk with Music." Although the brilliant Brownlee, recently seen as Ilona Ritter in the UNLV production of *She Loves Me*, doesn't have a character, she represents the love that Mercer sees as unattainable. This selection set the audience up



PHOTO BY VASNA WILSON
Tod Horman, (l) and Andrew Mueller portray the young and older Johnny Mercer

for some good, old fashioned romance.

All the musical selections told a story about what was going on at a particular time in Mercer's life, starting from

actors paired up into couples for the dance number, demonstrating how real love is bestowed on one another.

"But She's only a Dream," was sung by Mercer when he

his boyhood through his big years in New York and Los Angeles.

Another highlight included "My Mama Done Told Me," which showcased the loneliness Mercer must have felt searching for that special love. The

realized that his true love may only be found in his dreams. The song symbolizes true love, one of the main themes of the musical. Other themes include war, the lack of good jobs, the Hollywood party scene and reflecting back on one's life.

The final act, titled "Rainbow's End," featured the ensemble in "Good Companions," reflecting on all the partners Mercer has had in his life, whether in love or business. A beautiful reprise of Mercer's immortal "Moon River" brought the show to a close.

The original musical was created by director Robert Brewer, choreographer Rick Pessagno and playwright Frank Gagliano.

Brewer began his professional career as the youngest member of the faculty

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Sesame

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had the sweet sounding melodies of Grover and Oscar the Grouch lyrically battling over whether today was a good day or not. I think the music was a big part of the reason why our moms and dads used "Sesame Street" to keep us rug rats under control. If we were singing, how much furniture could we break?

This record is a map on how

to get back to "Sesame Street" for old fogies who want to be nostalgic about the past, but don't really want to learn anything socially redeeming. Let's face it, you get enough lernin' in coll-ige.

The bands doing these drunken covers stumble their



way down the dark alleys of "Sesame Street" and luckily, break out some original-sounding versions of these songs before passing out in the gutter. The styles range from obnoxious jazzy punk to upbeat, horn-blaring ska, and it's all pretty catchy.

Sick and Tired do a reworking of the Count's hit "8 Beautiful Notes," while **Pounded Clown** does "Lady Bug Picnic," which I swear has Big Bird as guest vocalist. Other bands trashing up the scene are **Guano, Krupted Peasant Farmers, Schlong, Lizards and Blind**, who do a powerhouse ska version of the song "12" (the song with the pinball machine, remember?).

Another crazy band that I

discovered from this record is the **Independents** from South Carolina. They do a weird take on "C is for Cookie" that sounds like the Misfits and the Specials had kids in the neighborhood of make believe (whoops, wrong show). Their style has been called horror-ska-punk.

My one regret with this record is that no one did "Rubber Duckie" or "Which of These Kids is Doing His Own Thing?" I suppose I'll have to wait for volume two to come out in order to hear those.

Another cool aspect of this record is the fact that it's released on LP as well. And THEY tried to tell us that vinyl is dead.

If you'd like to get some vi-

suals of that strange combination then you won't want to miss them when they come to town Friday at the Henderson's Jaycees Lodge with snap crackle and pop punksters **Dog Pound** from New Jersey and local alphabet hounds **Catapult**. Could be one to grow on.

All in all this is a party record even a Grouch could love. Maybe we should be thankful mom and dad were too busy for us. It's available at record stores in the neighborhood or through Bun Length Records, PO Box 2174 Berkeley, Calif., 94702. Who would win in a fair fight, Kermit the Frog or popular game show host Guy Smiley?

Play

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Sheilagh Polk will be seen in *Beer Chaser, Shooting Stick, Waxed Fruit and No Sanctuary*.

Keli Crawford stars in *Steep 10 Minutes, Shooting Stick and Duck Crossing*; Brian Anderson will be seen in *Steep 10 Minutes, Traction and No Sanctuary*; Michael Bunin takes the stage in *Shooting Stick, Waxed Fruit and Trac-*

tion, and Joel Babbit is featured in *Shooting Stick, Duck Crossings, Traction and No Sanctuary*.

Following the UNLV performance, the plays will be showcased at the Odyssey Theatre in Los Angeles, Feb. 14-17 at 8 p.m. and Feb. 18 at 2 p.m.

Performances for the Las Vegas production are at 8 p.m. through Saturday, with a 2 p.m. matinee Sunday. All tickets are \$5 and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Center box office. For more information, please call 895-3801.

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