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Surf's up at QTP for 'The Bikinis'

BY CLIFF KASDEN

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A wave of nostalgia is breaking onstage at Sandy Shores, aka Queens Theatre in the Park (QTIP). While surfboards, beach towels and Hawaiian shirts distract the eye, four lovely singers named "The Bikinis" refocus the audience. The musical is a tribute to the carefree surfing summers of the sixties.

Determined to provide a feel-good evening, the singing quartet tells their story through "golden oldies." There's "Heat Wave," "Under the Boardwalk," "Remember (Walking in the Sand)" and, of course, their namesake, "Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini!"

Yes, there is a story line. It's based on a million-dollar offer to trailer park denizens. If they sell their prime seaside property, they'll each receive a fortune. However, the plot is secondary to the girl's distinct personalities. They glow with genuine respect and affection for the era and for each other.

There's level headed Jodi (Kathy Morath), her free-spirited show biz sister Annie (Kirsti Carnahan), their delightfully ditzzy cousin Karla (Karyn Quackenbush) and savvy friend Barbara (Marva Hicks). Each character's exuberant gestures and upbeat narration offers a unique interpretation of the highpoints and disappointments of show business and coming of age.

Clever costume changes mark the passing of time and the girls' evolving expectations. Never taking themselves too seriously, they comically confide in the audience, racing halfway up the aisles. Their singing and dancing is no joke. All four are true professionals.

In Act II, the carefree mood becomes poignant. An overhead screen flashes photos of exhausted soldiers in the jungles of Vietnam. The group's accompanying version of "Dedicated to the One I Love" is a moving tribute.

The female foursome proudly moves on to "I'm Every Woman" and "I Will Survive." Ultimately, the atmosphere is warm and wistful. By the finale, the audience is clapping to the beat.

The project's Director/Choreographer/Co-Writer, Ray Roderick, has certainly made the most of each actor's talent. All enjoy extensive credentials on stage, screen and television. Their energy and charisma is contagious. Kudos as well to composer; musical director; arranger and keyboardist, Joseph Baker, and Co-Writer James Hindman.

There's still time to catch the wave this coming weekend at Queens Theatre in the Park. Call 718-760-0064 or surf the internet to info@queentheatre.org.

New York's frozen beaches are gloomy, but Queens' stages stay warm and bright. As always, save me a seat on the aisle.



Queens Theatre in the Park - THE BIKINIS, a New Musical Beach Party Cast: Kathy Morath, Karyn Quackenbush, Marva Hicks, Kirsti Carnahan
Photo: Danmuck Torino

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