

Brownie Mary rocks the Reed Commons

John Amorose
Collegian Staff

Last Friday, the Reed Commons was the showplace for another stellar, soon-to-be-famous Pittsburgh band, Brownie Mary. Along with special guest Windfall, Behrenders were treated to the best hour and a half or so of music that two bucks could buy.

The show opened with the middle-aged cover band Windfall, who performed to a less than enthusiastic bunch of students. It was obvious which musicians had influenced this band, as their set consisted of covers of popular oldies with more modern selections. Initially, I was horrified by the performance. Windfall opened with "Come To My Window" by Melissa Ethridge, then moved on to butcher completely the Kink's classic "U Really Got Me" and "What's Up?" by 4 Non Blondes. The band then took a tremendous leap of faith when they attempted the Jimi Hendrix rock anthem "Purple Haze"—a song they really had no business doing. The added harmonized lyrics and acoustic guitars, coupled with ridiculous, screeching electric guitar solos would have made Jimi spin in his grave.

But the show did have its good points. The band's cover of "Closer to Fine" by the Indigo Girls and Sting's "Message in a Bottle" were masterfully done. Even "I Do Not Know", the sole original song performed, was not bad. The two female singers harmonized well together, and the whining background guitars made it a very listenable track, but it was overshadowed by the plethora of cover songs that flooded the show. By far the most

impressive song of the show was the closing cover of "Somebody To Love", by Jefferson Airplane. The singing was perfect, as was the background music, and finally whipped the meager crowd into a Brownie Mary anticipatory lather.

After the initial shock, Windfall's wide variety of music grew on me like poison sumac. Many of the songs that were performed took a lot of guts, and I respected them for taking that kind of risk. But a band that limits their shows to cover songs suggests that they have little or no confidence in the original music that they work so hard to produce. On my classes I'd skip to go see them scale, they receive a 1 out of a possible 5, because I could hear most of the songs that they performed on the radio by the original artists.

Finally the time had come for Friday Night's main event—the long awaited arrival of Brownie Mary, one of Pittsburgh's most popular and intriguing acts. The band is fronted by charismatic, and might I add extremely attractive, Kelsey Barber, who's a cross between Jewel, Janis Joplin, and the girl next door. Kelsey is brilliantly complimented by the talents of her bandmates Ron Bissel on bass guitar, Rich Jacques, lead guitarist, and Mark Rajakovic on drums.

The band formed in 1993 when Barber and Jacques met at Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia. It was in this little town that the two decided to fuse Rich's songwriting and guitar skills with Kelsey's unique vocals and hypnotizing stage presence.

The band's name was taken from a woman by the name of Mary Rathbun, a volunteer worker at the

San Francisco General Hospital. Her work there was exclusively with patients in the cancer and AIDS wards. Mrs. Rathbun was arrested numerous times for distributing marijuana brownies to her "kids" to help counteract some of the side effects of these painful and debilitating diseases. Members of the press soon nicknamed her "Brownie" Mary. The band contacted her and received her permission to use the nickname.

After selling over 20,000 units of their independent releases and packing venues across the mid-Atlantic, Brownie Mary decided to sign with The Blackbird Recording Company, a subsidiary of Elektra Records. The band plans to release their debut album under this new label in Febru-

ary of 1998. Until then, the band is enjoying its final swing around the club and campus circuit, including a stop at Behrend last Friday night.

Barber and company quickly won over the crowd, and invited the audience to take a few steps forward and fill the gap between them and the stage. Countering a somewhat paltry turnout early in the evening with intimacy and sheer energy, Barber quickly became the center of attention as the band laid down infectious danceable rhythms to which the crowd could not help but respond. The band ripped through tracks from their upcoming release, as well as driving crowd favorites like "Bitch" and "Good-bye". The funky bass riffs and pumping drum

beats provided the backbone for the whirlwind of stellar songs that Brownie Mary performed with little or no pause between. Barber's incredible voice, gliding from howls to growls to sweet harmonies with guitarist Rick Jacques, had no trouble filling the Reed Commons. Jacques' guitar solos were fit precisely into each song, which added a more polished sound to the music. The best part of the show, and Brownie Mary's music, is the fluctuating tempo in all of their music; most would start out slowly, but all of the songs would end up rocking.

Brownie Mary showed their best side with their fine musicianship, solid songwriting ability, and furious intensity on stage. Between

Barber's convulsing and cavorting around the spacious stage and Jacques' seamless blending of rhythmic sensibilities and vicious sonic attacks, the band offered no quarter to its captive audience, and the crowd clearly loved every minute of it. Top to bottom, Brownie Mary are a formidable rock and roll outfit, and they were in peak form Friday night. On my classes I'd skip to go see them scale, Brownie Mary gets an impressive 4 1/2 out of a possible 5.

If you missed them on Friday, or just want to take them in again, Brownie Mary will be at the Crowbar in State College tonight, at Calimari's in Erie on November 21 and December 2, and at Metropol in Pittsburgh on November 26.



Lead singer Kelsey Barber and the rest of Brownie Mary

- ACROSS
- 1 The best
 - 5 Throws, as dice
 - 10 Catch sight of
 - 14 Freshly
 - 15 City in Nebraska
 - 16 Wheel hub
 - 17 Stratagem
 - 18 Stratum
 - 19 Sign on a door
 - 20 Of the stars
 - 22 Unwavering
 - 24 Contended
 - 26 Captain of fiction
 - 27 Deviates
 - 31 Overcharge for tickets
 - 34 Lennon's widow
 - 35 Brown color
 - 37 Relative to the onion
 - 39 Stage show part
 - 41 Play a guitar
 - 43 Path
 - 44 Like a moray
 - 45 Long-necked bird
 - 47 Way traveled; abbr.
 - 48 Station
 - 51 Part of NLRB
 - 53 Charles Lamb
 - 55 Yearn
 - 56 Parade fallout
 - 60 Drizzled
 - 64 Field
 - 65 Sound reasoning
 - 67 Weathercock
 - 68 Opp. of fem.
 - 69 WW II plane, — Gay
 - 70 School jacket
 - 71 If not
 - 72 Hinder
 - 73 Scatters seed

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- DOWN
- 1 Scarlett O'Hara's home
 - 2 Burden
 - 3 Nuisance
 - 4 Veer
 - 5 Places of learning
 - 6 Physicians' org.
 - 7 Utters

- 8 Greek letter
- 9 Vaughan and Purcell
- 10 Gain in size
- 11 Daddy
- 12 Finished
- 13 Pavilion
- 21 Affected manners
- 23 Resinous material
- 25 Profundity
- 27 Quantity of medicine
- 28 Readied the presses
- 29 Sheer fabric
- 30 Temptress
- 32 Memorize
- 33 Five: pref.
- 36 Of hearing
- 38 On an even —
- 40 Bodoni, e.g.
- 42 Automobile
- 46 Ship of 1492
- 49 Bullfight cheer
- 50 Named
- 52 Pointed arches

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answers
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- 54 Make amends
- 56 Approached
- 57 Spoken
- 58 Promontory
- 59 — plenty of...
- 61 Western alliance
- 62 Sufficiently, archaically
- 63 Lairs
- 66 — de France

Three Tall Women a waste of time

by Nadine Cross
Collegian staff

The Roadhouse Theatre for Contemporary Art is attempting to produce Edward Albee's 1994 Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Three Tall Women* and is failing miserably at it.

Directed by Michael Weiss, this production is a torturously long and dry rendition of what could have been a fabulous production. The written script is engaging; it is the actors' lack of ability to play against and with one another that ruined it.

Three Tall Women is a long, long session of storytelling in which the audience learns about the life of a ninety-one year-old character known only as "A." This wealthy woman is slowly losing her memory and is no longer able to recall important details in the stories of her life which she loves to tell. "A" is played by Mina Eisenberg who is the only element of this particular production that saves it from being downright horrible.

Eisenberg is sufficiently annoying (as her character should be) with her telling and retelling the same stories, along with her hilarious tales of her early sex life. She plays her part wonderfully as the nagging yet needy old woman for whom "B" and "C" must care. "A" illustrates her personality with temper tantrums and violent mood swings.

"B" and "C" are the two women

who take care of the older "A." "B" is her official caretaker, aiding her in daily tasks and seeing to the maintenance of her broken arm. "B" is a kind-hearted character who listens patiently to the old woman's tireless storytelling and suffers through her periods of mean-spirited yelling and throwing things. "C" is a very young woman who works for "A's" law firm and takes care of the old woman's finances. "C" visits "A" often because she refuses to pay her bills, as she is

also forced. The set is constructed of a double bed and lavishly decorated chairs surrounded with bright pink and white wallpaper. Developed by Scott McClelland and Dan Pruyn, it is a believable recreation of a wealthy woman's home. It is sufficiently over-done. The lighting seems a bit too bright; it hurts the eyes as it reflects off of the bright wallpaper.

The main problem of this production is trying to maintain audience interest and characters' lively interaction throughout what is essentially a two-and-a-half-hour long conversation. Presenting Albee's work is a formidable task for the Roadhouse's amateur actors, and Green and Kalberlein do not have the energy to compete with and compliment Eisenberg's considerable talent. The play is intended to be a story about the nature of time and aging, but this challenging effort can only be realized with actors who can pull the dialogue into a true conversation—not three separate sets of lines. In other words, the actors must be able to work with each other and play off each other extremely well.

While the majority of the plot is given in Act II of the production, the audience still must suffer through Act I. In my opinion, it is simply too torturous a wait.

The written script is engaging; it is the actors' lack of ability to play against and with one another that ruined it.

certain that the bank is stealing from her. While "B" (Judith Green) is a tolerable character, Green's acting is impersonal and dry. She seems incapable of interacting with the other characters and is robotic in her role. "C" (Victoria Kalberlein), however, is insufferable. While the character is intended to be whining and complaining — at a young age, who wants to be around a sick old woman? — Kalberlein doesn't cut it. Her complaining voice is screeching — like fingernails on a chalk board — while her acting is

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every Thursday morning