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## Three plays are better than one

preview by Ryan Russell  
staff writer

If someone said that three plays, one titled "976-Lust," another titled "The Pickup," and the last titled "Sex Lives of Superheroes" were coming to a local theater, would it garner people's interest? What if those three plays were coming to Behrend, courtesy of the Matchbox Players?

This Friday and Saturday, Behrend's Matchbox Players will be at it again, starring in three One Act Plays, less than one week after a highly successful Improv Night. The plays will be performed in the trusty Studio Theatre, and will start at 8 p.m. on both Friday and Saturday. The show is expected to run about an hour and 15 minutes, and tickets are only two dollars for students. So there will still be plenty of time and money to go out with after enjoying a night of laughter.

And despite the brain's first ideas formed from each play's title, none of the One Act Plays have anything to do with the dead itself.

"Although there are several sexual innuendoes, the show is not centered on the act," said Steve O'Donnell, director of "Sex Lives of Superheroes." "Each play shares the common ground of two individuals thrown together in interesting circumstances for the first time."

"Whether it's a phone call or a one-night stand, these couples are forced to get to know each other."

The first play, "976-Lust," written by David S. Raine, deals with Brian, who has just called a phone sex line for the first time and got more from it than he bargained for. It turns out the girl he talks to isn't even really a phone sex operator, and some of the most hilarious and awk-

ward conversations ever to grace the Behrend stage follow. The play is directed by Jared Semrau and will star Clark Pease and Leah Burfield.

The second play is "The Pickup," also penned by David Raine. This story centers around Marty Dixon, who went to the bar last night and woke up with a heck of a lot more to deal with than the usual hangover. He is tied to a chair under an interrogation light, and begins to think his friends are playing a joke on him. Then Claudia shows herself and decides to have some fun with poor Marty before help arrives. "The Pickup" is directed by Robert Frank and will star Xenia Tomlinson, Andrew Evans, and a special guest.

The third stanza in the One Act Plays trilogy is "Sex Lives of Superheroes," authored by Stephen Gregg. The show opens with an unusual daydream that Michael is having about his ex-girlfriend-turned-kleptomaniac Lisa, before he is interrupted by a knock at the door. The woman who interrupts poor Mike turns out to have an odd habit of her own, and as the show plays out it becomes clearer that some of the individuals involved need a few adjustments and in the end may need to learn something.

The final act stars John Stranahan, Amanda Golia, Grace Quiggle, Leann Bartomioli, Shea Moore and Tanaz Balaporia.

So why these three short plays? The answer is simple: High comedy plus Innuendos can add up to a good time for those in attendance.

"These three were the only shows with common ground and over the top comedy," said O'Donnell. "Realizing their potential we went ahead with them and the rest is history."

## Cable networks plan 'Queer Eye' parodies

by Daniel Fienberg  
Zap2it.com

Launching this summer, Bravo's "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" turned conventional mainstream sexual power dynamics upside down. While not exactly branching too far from traditional stereotypes, the show suggested the possibility that after years of being mocked and diminished in popular culture representations, things had progressed to the point where homosexual protagonists were free to both mock and improve straight people.

Out of that fertile ground, two "Queer Eye" parodies are set to emerge, both inverting the Bravo show's formula by introducing a panel of straight men ready to teach gay men how to pass for straight.

It may take a road map to tell the dueling parodies apart. Comedy Central is preparing "Straight Plan for the Gay Man" for a February launch, while Bravo will counter with the hour-long special "Straight Eye for the Queer Guy," set to air sometime next year.

The Comedy Central project will take the form of pure comedy in its three episodes. Four straight stand-up veterans -- Curtis Gwynn, Billy Merritt, Kyle Grooms and Rob Riggle -- will be the Flab 4, a group of experts in the ways of heterosexual masculinity. The Flab 4 will be enlisted to help three gay men achieve their straight dreams.

The gay subjects include Jonathan, a fashion salesman who wants to understand the life of a blue collar worker; Roger, a yoga instructor who just wants to join a pick-up basketball game; and Stephen, a singer/dancer who would like to see if he could become a ladies man. The Flab 4 will give each of these men a crash course in straight male life, messing up their clothes, stripping their kitchens bare and encouraging false egotism, as they let them pass as straight for a day.

It's going to be a bit like a fictional version of "The Man Show."

The first episode of "Straight Plan for the Gay Man" will air Feb. 17.

The tone of Bravo's reversal, which is expected to be a one-shot special, is a little

fuzzier. "Queer Eye" creators David Collins and David Metzler will oversee "Straight Eye" and they intend to maintain the nonfiction framework.

"It's done in a fun spirit, a campy spirit, in a way that allows the straight guys to have a little fun with the Fab 5," Collins promises.

While the special is still in the earliest planning stages, the producers speculate



The Fab 5 from "Queer Eye" could be wearing flannel shirts and eating Hungry Man dinners if Bravo and Comedy Central get their way.

that the Fab 5 will be involved. They also hope that the panel of "straight" experts will include some of the men who were made-over in the first season of "Queer Eye."

"It's also a way to show that these two worlds are not that far apart, so if our Fab 5 are teaching straight guys how to dress and how to have better social skills, then we feel the straight guys should have the opportunity to show the Fab 5 how to throw a football or how to enjoy a football game," adds Metzler.

While presumably the crash-courses in heterosexual mores will go beyond pigskin trivia and throwing the perfect spiral, the producers promise that the special will also include a mixture of valuable real lessons and light-hearted humor.

"There is going to be some takeaway information there," Metzler says. "There's definitely going to be some things you're going to walk away with that are informative and there's gonna be some things that you're gonna walk away with that are just funny."

# Adams doubles music offerings

review by Greg Smith  
contributing writer

You walk into your favorite record store. You're ready to pick up the much-anticipated album from Ryan Adams, the guy who's been called "the next Dylan." You can't wait to hear those country-flavored vocals, love-scorched lyrics and pedal steel guitar that you heard on Adams' 2001 smash, "Gold."

Well, my friend, you're in for a big surprise.

Ryan Adams traded in his acoustic for some pickups and an amp on his latest official release, "Rock N Roll." Recorded in the basement of a New York City bar, "Rock N Roll" finds Adams summoning groups such as The Replacements, moving from his normal alt-country style to jangly, synth-filled, 80s-style pop.

Adams starts off the album with four foot-stomping tracks with raunchy distorted guitar that give "Rock N Roll" a promising, but somewhat odd, feeling. The opening track, "This Is It," fires on all cylinders and is followed by the bluesy-riffs of "Shallow," which is the best track of the album. "1974" hits you with authority as Adams goes all out on the great rock chorus. "Wish You Were Here" is a solid track, but Adams seems to get careless with the lyrics as they get a bit thin (Everybody knows the way I feel about you / It's all a bunch of sh\*t).

"So Alive" is the first single to be released from "Rock N Roll," and it's a poor choice. It follows "Wish You Were Here" and is the point where the album takes a sharp turn south. It's almost reminiscent of early U2 with its quick riffing and Adams' falsetto-laden chorus. The majority of the rest of the album follows suit, with mind-numbing 80s guitar effects and synthesizer. Adams and his recording band seem to act like The Strokes on this album, and they're frankly wasting their talent.

For the most part, the lyrics on "Rock N Roll" work, but Adams did sink a in the in that department compared to past efforts. In an interview with VH1, Adams said he blamed his love problems on everyone else on past albums and now realizes there was a good chance he was at fault in many situations. Most of the tracks from "Rock N Roll" seem to deal with love issues, but has Adams really matured? In the tune, "Burning Photographs," he sings "I used to be sad / now I'm just bored with you."

An artist's changes are inevitable, but I don't think this record is a step forward for Adams. "She's Lost Total Control" is a downright awful song. While there is some good riffing on the album, and another incredible, all out rocker in "Note To Self: Don't Die," Adams ultimately fails at this 80s pop/punk attempt. But with a wide range of influences from the Grateful Dead to Hank Williams to Black Flag, this album was not a complete surprise from someone like the outspoken Adams, who, for all we know, could just be doing it to keep us guessing (the title track is, after all, the most mellow track on the album).

But fans should not despair if "Rock N Roll" isn't their style. In another surprising move, Adams also released the first of two EPs (the second is due Dec. 9) containing his aptly titled, scrapped studio album, "Love Is Hell." Put on



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROLLINGSTONE.COM  
Ryan Adams' album "Rock N Roll" hit stores on Nov. 4.

hold by his record label because it was too dark, "Love Is Hell, Part 1" features Adams in his most mellow setting yet. To call the album dark is an understatement; it's flat-out morose at most points. It's like an intensely dramatic film with little comedic relief. But that doesn't mean it isn't a strong effort. With every listen the EP has grown on me more and more.

Adams' songwriting talent really shines on "Love Is Hell." If the title isn't clue enough, you can sense his heartfelt pain in the pure darkness of the 8 tracks. The opening song, "Political Scientist," starts out slow and somber but builds, like many of the tunes, into a brilliant and thoughtful ending. Adams recalls love memories on "This House Is Not For Sale" with lyrics like "You were holding me honey, shaking my soul." Again, the title track is the most "upbeat" tune on the album and is really the standout track. Surprisingly, you may find yourself listening to the title track and smiling a little, despite the downer "love is hell, love is hell" chorus. Adams also skillfully puts a dark, sad twist on a cover of Oasis' "Wonderwall," a version that is superior to the original.

Adams' lyrical stylings are much more sincere and heartfelt on "Love Is Hell" than on "Rock N Roll." Although "Love Is Hell" is not his best effort, it is the first half of an emotional and excellent record, and I'm very much anticipating Part 2.

Adams is an interesting and gutsy character, enough so to release two completely different albums on the same day.

# Tupac documentary tells a poignant tale

by Roger Moore  
The Orlando Sentinel

In the end, Tupac has the last word. Rapper and "thug life" revolutionary, artist and articulate spokesman for his art, hard-hearted criminal and mama's boy, the many sides of Tupac Shakur have fascinated documentary filmmakers since his 1996 murder.

But "Tupac: Resurrection," directed by Lauren Lazin and produced by Shakur's mother, is the rapper, speaking of his hard life and music, his mistakes and triumphs, and even his impending death, in his own words.

That family cooperation means that this Tupac doc is full of his music, his videos, his home movies and family photos. Every audio or video interview he ever did was available.

And even though the result is something of a valentine to a guy who was, in essence, a brilliant poser whose death seemed triggered by his believing his own tough-guy hype, the many blunders and missteps he made are thoroughly documented. Lazin doesn't sugarcoat Shakur's run-ins with the law, both as a victim and guilty-as-sin punk who brought grief on himself and others.

Unlike the other Tupac docs, such as Nick Broomfield's notorious "Biggie and Tupac," this one doesn't concern itself much with who killed him or why he died. Lazin's film celebrates the life and lets him tell his own story. This is how Tupac saw himself -- mercurial, arrogant, ambitious, with talent to burn and "a really big mouth."

His close relationship with his Black Panther mother is shown. He talks about his influences, which will shock most -- Don McLean's folk ode to Van Gogh, "Vincent," was a favorite song.

He charms. He flirts. He seduces. And he's wicked quick with quip. He shows off the marks from a police beating to a TV interviewer.

Of course, the quintessential "hard" man wouldn't be too pleased to show that picture of him in ballet tights. But as paranoid and violent as he seemed, he started life on a star search, writing poetry, break dancing and rapping until he got his break.

And he wasn't done, yet. A genuinely charismatic movie star. Shakur was just emerging in Hollywood when his police troubles and then his

murder stopped a promising new career.

Lazin's film presents Tupac Shakur as a Lenny Bruce figure, persecuted, attacked by the system and probably murdered by it. Journalists have pointed the triggerman's finger at cops, and "Biggie and Tupac" filmmaker Broomfield lays the blame for the murder on Death Row Records honcho Suge Knight. The police don't seem to care.

Some of the sound in the film feels edited, as if Lazin flipped around the wording to make Shakur seem more prophet than pop star. But it's hard not to see a singer who rapped "Who will mourn me," and "looking at my life through a rear view mirror ... time to die" as prescient.

And she utterly glosses over some of his criminal activity -- the time he shot a couple of cops is barely mentioned.

But this is it, the complete "thug life," everything you wanted to know about the man, his history, his music. Knowing that its brilliant subject died at just 25 makes "Tupac: Resurrection" as poignant as it is informative.