

This 'Guys and Dolls' has a lot going for it



Nancy Gurwin plays Adelaide, who laments her long-term romance with Nathan Detroit, in "Guys and Dolls" at the Botsford Inn Dinner Theatre.

Performances by Nancy Gurwin Productions of the musical "Guys and Dolls" continue Thursdays and Sundays through February at the Botsford Inn Dinner Theatre in Farmington Hills. Tickets are at 6 p.m., dinner at 6:30, followed by the show. Tickets are \$18.50 per person. For reservations, call 474-4800.

By Barbara Michals
special writer

With at least eight bouncy hit tunes and lovable, unforgettable characters, "Guys and Dolls" is a perpetual audience-pleaser. The current Nancy Gurwin dinner theater production of the Frank Loesser musical boasts a superb cast and never disappoints.

The familiar fable of Broadway's saints and sinners, based on a story by Damon Runyon, hinges on the eternal battle of the sexes and the notion that a doll can really mess up a guy's life.

Entrepreneur Nathan Detroit (Edgar A. Guest III) has temporarily closed "the oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York," partly to satisfy the demands of his long-time fiancée Miss Adelaide (Nancy Gurwin). While Adelaide is pressuring Nathan for marriage, the heat's on from the cops and a big gambler in town demanding some action.

Fellow gambler Sky Masterson (Joe Lannen) has wagered Nathan that he can bend to his will any doll Nathan names. When Nathan names Sister Sarah (Leah Myers) of the Save-A-Mission, Sky must work at melting her icy reserve. He gets more than he bargained for.

BELEAGUED THOUGH he is, Guest's Nathan retains an appealing boyishness and indefatigable ingenuity and buoyancy. Guest gets ample opportunity to rug affably, and he really turns on the charm when he's down on his knees begging Adelaide's forgiveness in the very funny number "Sue Me."

Gurwin is a perfect Adelaide, complete with nasal twang and very convincing sneezes. Having been "the well-known fiancée" engaged to Nathan for 14 years, she now suspects that her habitual cold is psychosomatic. Anyone ever frustrated in love can appreciate Adelaide's hilarious lament, "For want of a band of gold, a person can develop a cold." Like Guest, Gurwin has a natural exuberance that works beautifully throughout the show.

As the lead singer at the Hot Box Cafe, Adelaide starts in the amusing chorus numbers "A Bushel and a Peck" and "Take Back Your Mink." Some clever costuming spices up the songs and helps compensate for the very tiny stage on which the girls must dance. Choreographer Deborah DeCen does a fine job of using the available space.

Lannen is a capable Sky Masterson, smooth, charming and displaying a pleasant singing voice in "Luck Be a Lady" and "I've Never Been in Love Before." His "My Time of Day" sounds a bit scratchy, though.

As Sister Sarah, Myers is convincingly shy and vulnerable, and she makes a wonderful drunk in the Havana episode. She does a fine rendition of "If I Were a Bell" and sounds good paired with Gurwin in "Marry the Man To

review

day," but her other numbers are shaky in all the upper ranges.

THE HAVANA sequence, when Sky flies Sarah down for dinner and piles her with drinks, is often the play's one slow spot. Thanks to some judicious cutting by able director Nancy Brassert, the scene flows smoothly and has more pizzazz than any version I've seen before.

The entire supporting cast of assorted hoods and mission folk do good work. As Nicely-Nicely, one of Nathan's sidekicks, Dennis Murphy does a great solo of "Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat." He joins Mike Rothaar, a very strong Benny Southstreet in the tuneful "Fugue for Tinhorns," "The Oldest Established" and the title song.

Harry Loucks is very credible as the streetwise Harry the Horse, and Carl

Dumas is appropriately menacing as Big Jule, the visiting Chicagoan who packs his gun where his heart should be. Dike Dwelley is pleasing as Sarah's understanding grandfather, and Ed Cable is well-cast as the frustrated, sad-faced Lt. Brannigan.

Barbara Ann Gowan's musical direction is smooth and capable. Corinne Barringer's costumes are wildly colorful, with Nicely-Nicely tops in satirical splendor. Robert Ralsch's sets look tacky for this splendid production, even given the limitations of the stage, and the slide flats showing residential streets seem inappropriate.

The Botsford Inn's buffet dinner features chicken, fish and oriental beef over noodles, plus fruit salad, tossed salad, mixed vegetables, rolls and dessert. The chef's prize-winning raspberry-almond tarts are a real treat.

Ed Guest's Nathan retains an appealing boyishness and indefatigable ingenuity and buoyancy. Nancy Gurwin is a perfect Adelaide, complete with nasal twang and very convincing sneezes.

"The Big Country" (1958), 1 Saturday night on Ch. 2. Originally 168 minutes. TV time slot: 175 minutes.

"The Big Country," a beautifully filmed picture, is set in a land as big as all outdoors, or as big as the seven seas — and that juxtaposition is at the heart of this laconic western. Sea captain Gregory Peck pits his instincts against the manners and mores of rival ranchers Charles Bickford and Burl Ives. Charlton Heston, Jean Simmons and Chuck Connors co-star in the William Wyler film with a lyrical Jerome Moross score.

Rating: \$2.95.

"Saturn 3" (1980), 9 p.m. Sunday on Ch. 4. Originally 88 minutes. TV time slot: 120 minutes.

Stanley Donen's "Saturn 3" looks like a cut-rate space film, but it's filled with wonderful sci-fi concepts, plot twists and ironies. Kirk Douglas and Farrah Fawcett star as a sort of futuristic Adam and Eve, with Harvey Keitel — and his robot, Hector — as the serpent. In the long run, though, there are no good guys and bad guys, and Douglas' realization of this at film's end is one of the finer moments in recent sci-fi flicks.

Rating: \$3.15.



second runs
Tom Panzenhagen

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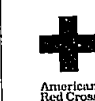


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