

Down-home musical a Meadow Brook delight

Thursday, May 2, 1991 O&E

(T.Ro-660)P&E

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of "Pump Boys and Dinnettes" continue through Sunday, May 19, on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information call the box office at 377-3300.

By Cathie Breidenbach
special writer

You will never see a finer bunch of good-ol' fella and good ol' girls than in Meadow Brook Theatre's toe-tapping, down-home musical "Pump Boys and Dinnettes."

The show mixes mellow country tunes, songs with a Nashville beat, some vintage rock 'n' roll and a smattering of spirited white soul, for a wonderful evening of the music born and raised in the mid South. "Pump Boys and Dinnettes" abounds with good humor under the direction of William Morris — from the visual humor of a deer rack hanging on the gas station wall amidst a lineup of shiny hub caps and fan belts to the verbal kind of humor in happily hokey lyrics that cele-

brate fishing, the sex appeal of a farmer tan and shoes to wear for drinking. Other songs speak of love in its many guises — for a woman named Mona who works at Woolworth's, for a grandma gone to her reward and for Dolly Parton by a smitten teen fan who sings "The Night Dolly Parton Was Nearly Mine."

Before showtime, four good ol' boys begin moseying around the gas station side of the set. They fuss with cords running from the mikes, tune guitars, wipe their hands on red rags and hangin' out of their denim overalls and strike up conversations with folks in the audience.

WHEN THE LIGHTS go down, the friendly fella turn out not to be stagehands but stars of the show. Jackson (Kim Story) is the substantial guy who looks like he ate too many helpings of grandma's cornbread and molasses. Eddie (Stephen Rust) is the taciturn hippie with the ponytail. Jim (Ollie O'Shea) co-owns the station out on North Carolina Highway 37, and the nerdy L.M. (Shawn Stengel) wears white socks with his loafers. He makes up for his



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lack of GQ style by playing the meanist, Jerry-Lee-Lewis, jump-around piano this side of the Mississippi. He even plays arpeggios with the seat of his pants.

Rhettie Cope (Joelilyn Young) and her younger sister, Prudie (Meghan Cary), a sassy pair of good-lookin'

women, carry fresh-baked pies into the diner they run next door to the pump boys' greasy gas station. When the music starts, they sing about food, including pecan pie (pronounced PEE-kan, with the accent on the first syllable the way folks say it in those parts). Rhettie and

Prudie pull out the frypans and kitchen paraphernalia to make a dandy percussion section, accompanying the boys on guitar, bass and piano.

And when Prudie and Rhettie pound the pans, they swing their hips and move to the music in a way that's a right pleasure to see. When they sing, the pleasure multiplies.

Forget plot in "Pump Boys." There's not much of one. Prudie is smitten by L.M.'s nerdy charm. Rhettie takes a liking to Jim, and the folks out on Highway 37 know a heap of ways to have fun. That's all the plot you need to have a hand-clapp-

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ing good time at "Pump Boys and Dinnettes."

Cathie Breidenbach of West Bloomfield teaches college writing classes and works as a freelance writer.

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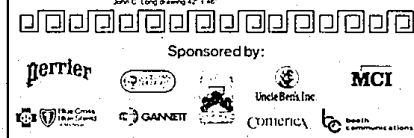
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