

Snoopy's dog days delight grownups, kids



Cast of "Snoopy" includes Andrea McArdle (front row, from left), Jeff Alan-Lee, Terry Kirwin, Nancy Beth Falloon and Kathy Andriani, Eric Minsk (back row, left) and Scott Elliott. The musical based on the "Peanuts" comic strip is recommended for grownups and for children age 6 and older.

Performances of the Birmingham Theatre production of the musical "Snoopy" continue through Sunday, Jan. 5. For ticket information call 644-3533.

By Barbara Michals
special writer

Every dog will have his day, but Snoopy, the irrepressible beagle of the "Peanuts" comic strip, gets to star in his own show. "Snoopy," the spirited musical at the Birmingham Theatre, proves that happiness is indeed a warm puppy.

While the show has guaranteed appeal for youngsters, the sparkling cast has enough charm to captivate anyone still young at heart.

In a series of musical numbers built around very brief sketches, the "Peanuts" gang sings of some of childhood's joys and trials. "Edgar Allen Poe" humorously illustrates students' fear of being called on in class when they are not prepared. "Don't Be Anything Less Than Everything You Can Be" is a fast-paced number that sums up the show's theme.

Exemplifying that message, "Snoopy's Song" protests the tedium of the old "sit up, roll over, play dead" routine of a dog's life. Mortified when Lucy reminds him that beagles are a "Prime Beagle," Snoopy is determined to assert his individuality. No matter that his creative writing efforts are callously rejected by Play-



Barbara Michals

beagle; he persists until he is somehow mysteriously named Head Beagle. "The Big Bow-wow."

SCOTT ELLIOTT plays the droll, cocksure, unflappable Snoopy to perfection. His expressive face, buoyant delivery and fine singing voice combine to make Elliott a strong stage presence. Dressed all in white, with his long dark hair suggesting Snoopy's droopy ears, Elliott makes it delightfully easy to suspend disbelief.

In this very well-balanced cast, Andrea McArdle's strong, clear voice still dominates any ensemble number. As the tomboyish Peppermint Patty, McArdle radiates some of the same sly and mischievousness that earned her renown as the original lead in "Annie." Her two solo songs are pure pleasure. "Hurry Up Face" is the lament of a girl teased about her big nose, and "Poor Sweet Baby" is a playful flirtation with the hapless Charlie Brown.

Terry Kirwin is a nicely understated Charlie Brown, the perpetual loser

who can't even control his own dog. He is subtle but effective in conveying Charlie's perpetual chagrin. As his little sister Sally, Kathy Andriani combines baby-doll good looks and a fluff of golden curls with solid performing ability.

Nancy Beth Falloon is appropriately shrill as the smug, domineering Lucy. Playing her brother Linus, Jeff Alan-Lee wonderfully captures his character's unique combination of intellectual arrogance and rampant insecurity.

Performing mostly in mime, Eric Minsk is amusing as Woodstock. Snoopy's feathered friend whose expressive face often provides a commentary on the other characters' antics.

Along with the engaging cast, Larry Grossman's bubbly music and Arthur Whitelaw's adept direction make "Snoopy" a thoroughly fun bit of fluff, perfect family entertainment. Slight and fast-paced, a recent matinee kept nearly all of the many children in the audience enthralled. (Among the very few exceptions, the little girl next to me was another budding Lucy.)

"Pocketful of Miracles" (1961), 8 p.m. Tue.-Sat. on Ch. 59. Originally 136 minutes. TV time slot: 180 minutes.

This should have been a terrific movie. Frank Capra's remake of his "Lady for a Day" had Bette Davis, Thomas Mitchell, Edward Everett Horton and a beautiful Ann-Margret. But except for brief moments, especially from Peter Falk, this film comes across as a gold-plated phoney. Capra knew it and blames star Glenn Ford for taking over artistic control. Then again, maybe the

Damon Runyon characters didn't work as well as they once did. Christmas cheer rarely seemed so forced.
Rating: \$1.5.

WHAT'S IT WORTH?

A ratings guide to the movies

Bad \$1
Good \$2
Excellent \$4



second runs
Hugh Gallagher

"Americana Graffiti" (1973), 11:30 p.m. Tuesday on Ch. 9. Originally 110 minutes. TV time slot: last program on schedule.
This exuberant comedy is the best, most affectionate, most accurate movie about being a teen-ager in the 1960s.

George Lucas never made a better or more personal movie. The characters are representational types but individualized by great performances and directorial touches. The visual impact of this film is stunning, especially the near choreographic shots of cruising.

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