

Reinventing a music legend simply an American tradition

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Since Elvis impersonators franchised the legend of The King, popular tastes have been hardly satiated by radio stations dedicated to classic songs from the definitive era of rock and roll and country.

Untimely deaths may have ended the flesh-and-blood presence of music superstars, but that hasn't meant a halt to their careers. Shows dedicated to Elvis, The Beatles and Buddy Holly demonstrate that the careers of the departed not only live on, they flourish.

In the tradition aptly called appreciation by reinvention, "Always... Patsy Cline" offers an experience beyond listening to a jukebox or greatest hits CD of country music's first cross-over artist with hits such as "Crazy," "Sweet Dreams," "Walkin' After Midnight," and "I Fall to Pieces." The tribute to legendary country singer Patsy Cline at the intimate Century Theatre succeeds in evoking her physical presence. It's also a reminder that imitation might offer a warm fuzzy, but it's not the real thing.

In what amounts to a tale of unflinching adoration told by a fan (Louise Segor), "Always... Patsy Cline" takes no risks in giving contemporary audiences what is inarguably most important - Cline's music. There's plenty of chances to

■ **'Always...Patsy Cline'** is a feel-good show. Tap your feet, clap your hands. And above all, appreciate the down-home honesty of the music.

What: "Always...Patsy Cline," a musical tribute featuring 27 songs
Where: Century Theatre, 333 Madison Avenue, Detroit
When: Open-ended run, Wednesday-Sunday, Times vary.
Tickets: \$24.50-\$34.50
For Information: Call (313) 963-9800

clap along with the honky-tonk beat pounded out by a cracker-jack on-stage band. And there's the hokoy, down-home sensibility delivered over-the-top from a script dripping in sentimentality. Between performances of 27 songs, Cline's die-hard fan talks about their chance meeting and friendship from 1961, two years before the singer was killed in a plane crash. Segor shows a knack for physical comedy and an impressive ability to improvise to the remarks of the audience.

The recitation of a letter written by Cline to her adoring fan captures the down-home realness of the country star. She is a mother who misses her kids when she's on the road, and a wife with ambivalent feelings for

her husband.

Even in her letter, Cline's voice is pure and filled with a melodic anguish.

Before Hank Williams and Cline, country music was yodeling and the streaming melodies of bluegrass. Williams helped to re-craft country songs. And few can compare to Cline's indelible voice, touched with a haunting sense of longing and sexiness.

Long before Shanin exposed her navel and Dolly showed that her bountiful bosom matched her prodigious talent, Cline's smooth delivery was leading country music in a new direction.

In the medley that opens the second act, Cline impersonator Jessica Welch hits the mark. She balances the distinctive style of Cline with her own winsome interpretation in nailing "Crazy." And then, in a tender moment, Welch offers a glimpse at her own talent in delivering the emotionally wrought of the lullaby, "Through the Eyes of a Child."

"Always...Patsy Cline" is a feel-good show. Tap your feet, clap your hands. And above all, appreciate the down-home honesty of the music.

If the King can live on, so can Patsy.



Reinvention: Jessica Welch evokes the stage presence of country music legend Patsy Cline.

EMU students to present 'Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery'

Eastern Michigan University continues its winter season with Shay Youngblood's "Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery," a coming of age story and 1999 nominee for the NAACP Theatre Award, weekends through March 25 in the Sponberg Theatre on campus in Ypsilanti. The play is a drama that combines storytelling, music and dance to reveal seasons of mystery, faith and healing.

Set in a small 1960s Southern community, "Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery," is a memory play that reflects the courage of Daughter, a young African American woman returning to her childhood where she encounters the spirits of the women who raised her. Now grown, Daughter reflects on her past and the "Big Mamas" who taught her the traditions and rituals of their

ancestors leading her first to the river and then beyond into womanhood.

Daughter's preparation to go to the river is symbolic of her journey into womanhood and is rooted in the Nigerian tradition of the Yoruba ritual. In Yoruba religion, the traditional belief includes the worship of many gods. Yemouja, one of the African goddesses, was "said to be the

daughter of the sea into whose waters she emptied." She is the mother of many Yoruba gods, as well as mother of the waters and the ultimate manifestation of female power. On the day that Daughter must go to the river she learns the truth about her life and earns

the knowledge that the "Big Mamas" had prepared her for life and had bestowed her with many gifts to pass on.

"Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery," runs 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, March 17-18, Thursday-Friday, March 23-25; and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, March 19 in the Spon-

berg Theatre on EMU's Ypsilanti campus. Tickets are \$8 for Thursday performances, \$13 Friday-Saturday, and \$11 Sunday. There is a \$2 discount for tickets purchased more than 20 minutes in advance. Call (734) 487-1221 for information.

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Concert ticket prices \$30, \$60, \$115, \$135, \$165, and \$250. Tickets are available at the Detroit Opera House box office and all ~~other~~ ticket centers, including Hudson's and Harmony House stores. To charge tickets by phone, call (248) 645-6666.

Ms. Norman will be the guest of honor at an afterglow fundraising reception and dinner at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History to benefit the museum. Tickets for the afterglow reception and dinner are \$150 and \$250. For dinner reservations or additional afterglow information, call the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History at (313) 494-5854.

Chamber Music Society of Detroit
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