

Arts & Entertainment

UWO's *Grease* reclaims the stage

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Poodleskirts and drive-ins, sexism and cigarettes: "Grease" captured the best and worst of the 1950s as the UW Oshkosh theatre department debuted its first musical production in over two years on Nov. 3.

"Grease" follows the story of two groups of high school students, the Burger Palace Boys and the Pink Ladies, as they navigate growing up and finding their identity in the 1950s.

The cast performed four nearly-sold-out shows of the iconic musical over the weekend. They followed the original 1971 production instead of the 1974 movie-musical starring Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta.

"Everyone has their own idea of what 'Grease' is," director Merlaine Angwall said. "We're doing the original version, so it's a lot raunchier."

She was right: There were plenty of middle fingers and perfectly-timed F-bombs to maintain the authenticity of teenage rebellion and earn endless laughs from the audience.

"The movie kind of cleaned everything up and sanitized it. It was very G-rated," Angwall said. "Our version is definitely not G-rated."

The show's leading lady, good-girl-turned-bad Sandy, was played by third-year student Alyssa Proell. Her sugar-sweet soprano was a perfect fit for the role and blended well with her co-star, Jordan Whitrock, who played the stubborn rebel Danny.

While the two had a great stage chemistry during tracks "Summer Nights" and "All Choked Up," Proell said she was grateful that the 1971 version they performed focused not only on Sandy and Danny's love story, but the dynamic of a whole group of teenagers.

"It's not just a show about two people, but rather an entire group of kids in high school growing and connecting through struggles and challenges together," Proell said.

UWO's version highlighted the talent of the entire cast with the tight harmonies of the Pink Ladies, the humor of the Burger Palace Boys and the impressive choreographic performance from Cha Cha, played by Mackenzie Williams.

Of course, we can't forget the



Courtesy of UW Oshkosh Theatre Department

UW Oshkosh's production of 'Grease' is different than the movie version but is still filled with the songs people know and love.

smooth crooning of the Teen Angel and Frenchy, played by Luke Meister and Maddy Ebben.

One memorable supporting role was Rizzo, played by third-year student Lily Slivinski, who perfectly embodied Rizzo's snarky, cool demeanor.

Slivinski said that Rizzo has always been one of her dream roles. On opening night, she wasted no time taking advantage of the opportunity and immediately filled the stage with her sarcastic comments, perfectly-timed eye-rolls and promiscuity.

"I love playing villains and mean characters," Slivinski said. "I love something about a character with a little grunge and seeing how vulnerable she gets."

It's only when Rizzo found out she might be pregnant that her stoic walls began to crumble as she belted the emotional "There are Worse Things I Could Do," a number Slivinski said she found difficult to perform.

"It's hard, and I connected to it very personally," she said.

Rizzo wasn't the only supporting role that stood out among the dazzling cast. Her on-and-off boyfriend and hot-headed member of the Burger Palace Boys, Kenickie led arguably one of the best numbers of the show.

"Greased Lightnin'" featured the powerful tenor of third-year student Conner Andersen, who played Kenickie, as well as impressive back-up vocals and cho-

reography from the rest of the Burger Palace Boys. The boys wasted no space on stage as they swung their Levis-clad hips and jumped on the fully-drivable car on stage.

"I was expecting some sort of golf cart," Andersen said of the infamous "Greased Lightnin'" car. "But the car was perfect, and it showed."

Andersen, a transfer student from UW-Green Bay, said the best part of the show was the bond created between cast members as they reclaimed the UWO stage after so much time since the last school musical.

"They're basically like a family to me," Andersen said. "I can't wait to work with them in the future."

However, behind the red lipstick and hand-jiving, "Grease" has become one of the more controversial musicals in recent years, with some schools even canceling shows due to backlash.

Critics of the musical raise concerns about the plot of girls changing themselves to make boys like them as well as some questionable lines like "Tell me more, did she put up a fight?" They often call the show "anti-feminist" and "sexist."

Proell said that Sandy didn't exchange her innocent, prudish reputation for the bad-ass leather jacket and cigarette just to feel validated by Danny.

"I believe that Sandy changes

because she wants to embrace being different, not just for love, but for her own sense of confidence," she said.

Angwall said that while the musical is a romantic-comedy set in the 1950s, it also addresses serious themes that are still relevant today, referring to Rizzo's pregnancy scare.

"In the '50s, a girl had no choice," Angwall said of unplanned pregnancies during that time period. "You were shunned; you were sent away."

She also noted the lack of birth control options for women during the 1950s. She compared the poor situation to the recent *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, which overturned the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973.

"With the overturning of it, I think it's very poignant that this is still relevant," Angwall said.

Despite the controversy, the production's iconic score, edgy dialogue and classic American pop culture caused the show to nearly sell out.

However, the UWO theatre department won't leave the stage empty for long; they will perform the play "My Genius of Humanity," which explores the experience of an Armenian-American family set during World War II, Dec. 7-11.

A full schedule of performances can be found at uwosh.edu/theatre/productions.



Courtesy of UW Oshkosh Theatre Department

Sandy and Danny sang the duet "All Choked Up" to end the show.

Farmers Market moves inside for winter

By Mattie Beck
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The Oshkosh Farmers Market has moved inside to the Oshkosh Arena for winter, with the turnout still as strong as it was before.

The Oshkosh Farmers Market normally take place outside every Saturday on Main Street, but due to the weather turning colder, the decision was made to hold them at the same time, just inside.

Michelle Schmid-Schultz, the market manager, was happy with the success of the first inside market.

"The first Oshkosh Farmers

Market-Winter had a great turnout considering the blustery, cold weather. The market welcomed over 600 attendees and 32 vendors," Schmid-Schultz said.

There has been an increase in participation this year, according to Schmid-Schultz.

"With the increase in vendor participation this year, the market has expanded into the Arena Bowl."

Along with the vendors in the arena, there are also events that take place during the Saturday market.

"The market features live, local music each week and many new

events with the arena and other organizations are being planned for this year," she said.

The events vary from holiday to craft-themed, taking place with the according season.

The schedule is:

- The Holiday Bazaars will be held on Nov. 26 and Dec. 17.

- The Market is partnering with the Oshkosh Arena for two Artisan and Craft Fairs on Feb. 11 and Apr. 15.

- The Spring Bazaar will be held on April 8, 2023.

- The launch of Go Green Oshkosh will be held on April 22.

The Market is planning for

Kids Day in March and an Art Competition in April.

This is the 11th year it has been held inside, as to why it was moved inside, Schmid-Schultz said it was for the farmers.

"There was a need to keep the market year 'round to give agriculture vendors a place to take their products to sell," Schmid-Schultz said.

Since the pandemic, the number of vendors participating has gone up.

"Vendor participation is up 30% over pre-pandemic numbers, up 50% over vendor participation during the pandemic,"

Schmid-Schultz said.

Though it is winter, the vendors still have lots of produce available for sale.

"The Winter Market still offers an abundance of late-season produce including a large variety of squash, potatoes, beets, gourmet mushrooms, onions, brussels sprouts, cranberries, apples, carrots, baby greens and more," Schmid-Schultz said.

The Winter Market will continue to run on select Saturdays. For more information check the schedule check out osfmi.com.