

# PALM BEACH POST

## Review of 'Shout!' with sounds and social changes of the '60s

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There are plenty of shapely, miniskirted legs frugging, watusi-ing and swimming about in *Shout!*, the nostalgic "mod" revue of the 1960s, but the show's best moves are surely the tongues planted firmly in cheek over the music of that era.

The songfest, receiving its American premiere at the Kravis Center's Rinker Playhouse before heading directly off-Broadway, starts winking at us from the first sight of new Tony Award winner David Gallo's kinky set. Dotted with giant plastic multicolored daisies that hang above a shagadelic red shag carpet, the stage is decked out for either an evening of fun or the return of *The Dating Game*.

Fortunately, it turns out to be the former, since director Philip George and choreographer David Lowenstein have mined some fab musical artifacts from the Kennedy-Johnson days, just before the rise of women's liberation and without any traces of the Vietnam era's poetry of protest.

*Shout!* could well have turned a jaundiced eye to such sexist pop songs as *Wishin' and Hopin'* or *Wives & Lovers*, as the more politically conscious revue *Respect: A Musical Journey of Women* did. Instead it is content to wink at us about them, knowing we are in on the joke.

The sly and giddy *Shout!* prefers to win us over with a quintet of comely faux-British birds, each designated by a color and devoted to the fictional *Shout!*, *The Magazine for the Modern Woman*, which dictates their destinies based on the tones of their Philip Heckman-designed wardrobes.

They are also dependent on the advice of the magazine's lovelorn columnist, Gwendolyn Holmes — voiced on tape by the deliciously arch Carole Shelley. Gwendolyn is clueless and materialistic, the sort of woman who responds to a desperate cry for help by suggesting the cure of a pedicure.

Anyway, these comic bits, as well as strings of one-liners and dance breaks that bring to mind *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*, are secondary to the three dozen or so song hits first popularized by such Brits as Petula Clark, Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black and LuLu. Surely there were moody ballads back then, but *Shout!* errs on the side of chipper tunes with a driving beat.

The show all but dares us not to give in to these songs, not to crack a smile of recognition upon hearing 1-2-3, *Don't Sleep in the Subway* or *I Only Wanna Be With You*. Not to start toe-tapping or swaying to the sounds of *Don't Give Up*, *Those Were The Days* or the title number, that boisterous staple of bar mitzvahs and weddings.

Not all five color characteristics are equally vivid, but the women wearing these rainbow hues each receive and score with solo spotlight opportunities. Bespectacled Denise Summerford (Red) has a deft comic touch as the most ill-at-ease of the group, but she sure renders *To Sir With Love* with punch.

Her diametric opposite is sexual predator Erica Schroeder (Green), in continuous heat, which proves helpful in her sensual delivery of *Goldfinger*. The rest — Marie-France Arcilla (Blue), Erin Crosby (Yellow) and Julie Dingman Evans (Orange) — are also adept, whether singing or adding comic accents with offbeat percussion instruments.

Produced by the team behind *Menopause: The Musical*, *Shout!* shows every sign of becoming a similar successful, celebratory girls' night out. But this goofy look at the '60s is a much more inclusive entertainment that guys should enjoy almost as much as their dates do.