

## Review: 'The Marvelous Wonderettes' at San Jose Rep

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Go, Chipmunks! "The Marvelous Wonderettes" cordially invite you to Springfield High School's 1958 prom. Actually, the boys glee club, the Crooning Crabcakes, was scheduled to headline the event, but the lead singer, Billy Ray, got suspended for smoking behind the girls locker room. Ooooooh. And so the boys got booted and the Wonderettes got the gig.

Be there or be square. Just remember to spit out your gum and watch out for spiked punch. Roger Bean's bouncy, off-Broadway jukebox musical revue is a walk down memory lane to the age of sock hops and poodle skirts. This shoop-shoop-filled homage runs through June 27 as part of San Jose Repertory Theatre's Summer Blockbuster Series.

If you know your Big Bopper from your Chubby Checker, this is your cup of nostalgia. If, on the other hand, you have never heard of mimeographs and pinkie-swearing, then some of the period gags may go over your head.

In the first act, the Wonderettes are a squeaky clean girl group with hearts as big as their crinoline skirts. Meet Cindy Lou (Christina DeCicco), a sweet-faced glory hog, brassy Betty Jean (Holly Davis), mousy and bespectacled Missy (Lowe Taylor) and clueless gum-chewing Suzy (Bets Malone). The gal pals regale us with a host of '50s and '60s pop hits including "Mr. Sandman," "Dream Lover," "It's in His Kiss," "Lipstick on Your Collar," "All I Have to do Is Dream," "It's My Party" and "Secret Love."

In between the ditties, all of which are brightly rendered, the girls take turns pitching fits. It seems Cindy Lou has been making time with Betty Jean's beau, a situation that leads to several girl-fight face-offs. In one interlude, the former BFFs compete for the spotlight by any means necessary. Betty Jean jangles her tambourine while Cindy Lou bounces her décolletage.

All four of these performers are veterans of the show with great pipes and comic chops. Their vibrancy gives the revue its charm, especially in the powerhouse second act. Ten years have elapsed during the intermission, and we are now attending the class reunion in 1968. This is when the girls have started down the path from goody-two-shoes to groovy chick status. Out with the chiffon; it's time for go-go boots and attitude.

Suzy has a marriage on the rocks and a bun in the oven. Cindy Lou now calls herself Cynthia. She tried to make it big in Hollywood but came back home to fall for a bad boy and get a tattoo. Betty Jean's hubby walked out on her, and Missy, who has been secretly dating Mr. Lee (the teacher they all had a crush on back in the day) is desperate to get hitched.

All that melodrama helps fuel a slew of soulful '60s hits. Malone wails her way through "Rescue Me" and "Respect." De Cicco belts out a memorable "Son of a Preacher Man," and Taylor rivets with a steely "You Don't Own Me."

Make no mistake, this musical is fluffier than cotton candy. Be forewarned that audience interaction is involved, including voting for prom queen, and one lucky gentleman from the front row gets to stand in for the dreamy Mr. Lee. Also, the plot is just an excuse to sing along to a string of golden oldies. Even so, the "Wonderettes" makes for peachy keen summer fare for the "Grease" generation.

Contact Karen D'Souza at 408-271-3772. Check out her theater reviews, features and blog at [www.mercurynews.com/karen-dsouza](http://www.mercurynews.com/karen-dsouza).

"The Marvelous Wonderettes"

The upshot: A peachy keen jukebox musical tribute to the songs of the "50s and "60s.  
Through: June 27

Where: San Jose Rep,  
101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose

Running time: just over 2 hours (one intermission)  
Tickets: \$35-\$74. 408-367-7255, [www.sjrep.com](http://www.sjrep.com)