



Marilyn Kaye, Donna E. Miller and Jill Geddes as the 'Rock' Ronnettes

A.M.—The Pre-Invasion Rock Musical

BY F. KATHLEEN FOLEY

Produced by Rob D'Avola and Rick Stuart; Backlot Cabaret, 657 N. Robertson Blvd., West Hollywood; (213) 480-3232. Opened Aug. 16; plays Tues.-Thurs. & Sun., 8; Fri.-Sat., 7 & 9; runs indefinitely.

Back before the year 1963, when watergate was still a flood control device and the oil crunch only occurred when you ran out of Brylcreem, the youth of America was bebopping to the finger-snappingest rock and rou tunes of this century. Granted, rock had only been around a few years at that point but it's doubtful whether tunes like the Isley Brothers' "Shout" or Otis Redding's "Respect" will ever be equalled or surpassed.

Conceived by Rob D'Avola and written by Rick Stuart, *A.M.* harkens back to the years 1960-63 when Elvis was already firmly established and the Beatles were a mere glimmer in Brian Epstein's eye. D'Avola and Stuart have concocted a vintage "boy meets girl" musical as flimsy and fun as a Frankie Avalon/Annette Funicello beach blanket movie. So forget structure; it's the derriere-kicking songs of *A.M.* that get your blood moving. In fact, *A.M.* should be marketed as a restorative for the pre-Genitrol generation.

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The five singer/performers are uniformly excellent. Marilyn Kaye really tears the audience up in her "Don't Make Me Over" number and she has a lot of fun playing her gum-chomping, man-crazy bimbo too. Darryl Milton does a soul-satisfying version of a real ball of fire singing "Great Balls of Fire." Among her other numbers, Donna E. Miller does a dead-on Diana Ross impersonation that could have been lifted from the archives of *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Jill Geddes' sweet voice is well-suited to numbers like "Johnny Angel" and "Hey Paula."

Musical director and pianist Kevin Bassinson leads the back-up band and the performers, keeping the pace strong and the rhythm infectious, and managing a few neat dancing and

singing turns as well. Denny Brooks' period deejay voice is appropriately hyper.

Director/choreographer Anita Mann understands this particular period in rock as few others could. A dancer and choreographer on several Elvis and beach blanket films, she also appeared on the television shows *Hullabaloo*, *Shindig* and *Shiaware*. From the Pony to the Locomotion to the Twist and back again, she keeps the action brisk and invigorating. So slick back your ducktail, stick your gum behind your ear and go see *A.M.* But remember: dancing the dog will get you thrown out of the prom.