

Review:

'A.M.' is a Goodie

by Steve Zee

Possibly taking a cue from the recent success of the "Oldies but Goodies" programming of many pop radio stations across the country, the people who conceived and produced "A.M. — The Pre-Invasion Rock Musical," probably knew that they weren't taking many chances staging a rock "musical" that features the music that baby boomers grew up with. 'A.M.' primarily concentrates on the boy-girl-themed pop hits from the late '50s and early '60s.

The five-member cast, 3 women and 2 men, (in addition to a well-seasoned five-



piece back-up band) are introduced as a group of teenagers growing up in any town U.S.A. Their short bits of dialogue are campy and humorous, always leading the audience into the next musical number. In the background throughout the show is the voice of an unseen D.J. who will occasionally break in with the introduction to a song.

Having very little emphasis on individual characters or overall plot, A.M. seems to come off as more of a "revue" than musical. But where A.M. does shine is in its sheer entertainment value, with each vocalist having no trouble covering the wide range of styles in the program, and all turning in energetic, well choreographed performances.

From the riveting opening production of The Isley Brothers' classic "Shout", (which ends up with the cast members dancing through the audience) to all those favorite "girl group" standards such as *Be My Baby*, *He's A Rebel* and *Johnny Angel*, don't expect to find yourself dozing off, or even wanting to go to the bathroom, 'cause every number brings back more memories than the next.

Turning in an outstanding performance was Darryl Milton, who always succeeded in bringing the audience to a foot-stomping frenzy. From his duet with Earl Scooter, covering Sam and Dave's *Soul Man* and Little Richard's *Good Golly Miss Molly*, all the way through *Try A Little Tenderness*, (a real crowd pleaser) and on to singing the lead in an *a capella* version of *So Much In Love*, (where all five vocalists got to show their finesse), Mr. Milton clearly displayed the vocal range and stylings needed to make the music from this era work.

The 3 female vocalists, Jill Geddes, Marilyn Kaye, and Donna E. Miller, seemed to be at their best doing the group numbers such as *Mama Said* and *Stop! In The Name Of Love*, with each one cleverly choreographed and costumed as well.

So, if you're looking for an evening of pure entertainment and foot stomping fun, and a pleasant break from the disco-drone of modern pop, 'A.M.' is the place to be.

'A.M. — The Pre-Invasion Rock Musical' is at the Backlot Cabaret, 657 N. Robertson Blvd., West Hollywood. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays at 8 pm; Fridays and Saturdays at 7 and 9 pm. For more information, call (213) 659-1559.