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Alice in One Hit Wonderland 2

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Alice (Beth Kennedy) encounters Wonder Woman (Audrey Siegel) in -- you guessed it -- Wonderland. (Source: Cheryl Games)

WARNING: Don't be late. And if you are late, don't be the last one into your seats. That's all I'm gonna say.

Alice in One Hit Wonderland 2: Through the Looking-Glass follows dementedly on the heels of last summer's hit production "Alice in One Hit Wonderland." "Alice 2," as we shall call it, is a musical, a semi-improvisational pop culture parody, and yet another riotous offering from the fertile and febrile inner workings of The Troubadour Theater Company and its Mad Hatter artistic director, Matt Walker. But most of all, it is the most fun you will have this entire summer anywhere, even with your clothes on. Guaranteed.

"Alice 2" follows the addled adventures of Lewis Carroll's eponymous heroine who has now grown up and, having left both England and the 19th Century behind, found employment as a domestic with an American family called the Bradys. It's a blended family with a lot of annoyingly perky children.

This bunch, however, no longer has Florence Henderson for a mom. Their father, having apparently at last obeyed his inner yearnings, went ahead and dumped her, found a male companion, and moved poor Alice out next to the cars in the (as he pronounces it) "gayrahj." It is through the oval mirror in her cramped and carbon monoxide-laden quarters that the put upon and underpaid Alice goes searching for adventure.

Mr. Brady's new companion may or may not be Lewis Carroll himself (played by Matt Walker himself), who, like Alice the maid, has passed through the space-time continuum. The dapper Victorian gentleman gets fed one of those *meshugge* illegal mushrooms by the naughty Brady children and his chemically deconstructed brain begins to conjure up the strange world Alice finds on the far side of her looking-glass.

Mr. Carroll now has a Macintosh notebook with which to script Alice's adventures, and the lightning fast Motorola processor allows him to bang out alternative dialogue whenever she or her fellow Wonderlanders refuse to perform what he's written for them. He jumps into the action on occasion, narrates it at other times, and provides suitable sound fx from slide whistles and Bozo horns as required. Don't ask; it's just how insanity works.

Alice (the brilliant Beth Kennedy) still in her blue uniform and sporting her trademark washday beehive, pushes through to the other side where she meets up with two queens (no, the red and white chessboard kind, silly), a couple of acrobatic doofuses called

Tweedledee and Tweedledum (Dan Waskom and Matthew Morgan, grand masters of physical comedy), a wise-cracking egg who sits on a wall (Mike Sulprizio), a giant flying insect introduced as A. Gnat Funicello (I'll wait for the groan to work its way out of your trachea.....), a menacing, somewhat goofy Jabberwocky (Matt Scott), and, assorted other creatures, characters, and oddballs -- each cast member playing many parts.

If there is a moment one could call a cultural apotheosis in this bedlam, it is when Alice stumbles upon an AA meeting - Alices Anonymous - and there encounters TV's "Kiss my Grits" Alice (the vocally magnificent Lisa Valenzuela), Martin Scorsese's "Alice Doesn't Live Here..." Alice (Erin Matthews), Alice "The Honeymooners" Kramden (Jennie Fahn), Alice Cooper (Jack Voorhies), Grace Slick's "Go Ask" Alice (Audrey Siegel), and a representative from the Seattle grunge band "Alice in Chains" (Andy Lopez).

As to the "one hit wonder" part of the show's title, the tuneful insanity is made possible by an onstage cover band of such talent and chameleonship that they can flawlessly reproduce everything from Devo's "Whip It" to Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive," from Carl Douglas' "Kung Fu Fighting" to Toni Basil's "Micky (You're so Fine)," from Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" to Wild Cherry's "Play That Funky Music." All these hits and many more are fitted out with brand spanking new lyrics and put into contexts so utterly not-as-originally-intended that their authors really should sue if they possibly can. The band's members include musical director Eric Heinly on drums, bassist and Stevie Wonder impersonator Andre Holmes, guitarist Toni Ruffin and keyboard whiz Robert Martin.

The production has an overall look of lavish expense which is made possible by the Tony Award®-worthy costumes of Sharon McGunigle, extravagant lighting and sound design by Nick McCord and Robert Ramirez respectively, and the brilliantly fanciful settings conjured up by Sherry Santillano. "Alice 2" is danced to within an inch of its life and requires three master choreographers to get it done: Nadine Ellis, Ameenah Kaplan, and Christine Lakin.

Let's put it this way: If you don't go see "Alice in One Hit Wonderland 2: Through the Looking-Glass," you will end up hating yourself and spiraling down into a desolate inconsolability from which there will be no escape. Don't let this happen to you. That's all I'm gonna say.

Performaces through October 12 at the Falcon Theatre, 4252 Riverside Drive, Burbank, CA. Performance schedule is complicated (plays in repertory). For tickets and further info call (818)995-8101 or visist www.falcontheatre.com or www.troubie.com

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