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August 29, 2008

By Jennie Webb

What can you say when a team that clearly knows how to play the game — hell, practically invented the damn game, or the troupe's own fabulous version of it—is amazingly, brilliantly on their game? A 10, judges? How 'bout an 11? The [Troubadour Theater Company](#)'s latest foray into irreverent rock 'n' roll [Shakespeare](#), where Bono meets the Bard and pretty much kicks ass, is just about as good as it gets.

This time out, director [Matt Walker](#) and company have created a perfect match in Shakespeare's free-spirited *As You Like It* and the pulsing pop-rock sound of [U2](#). Because out in the forest of Arden, where the streets have no name, it's all about desire and not-so strangers with oh-so mysterious ways. Uh huh. Keep 'em coming, folks. Here, Walker is more than comfortable in the role of Touchstone, the way-motley fool, who guides us along the thorny plot points as cousins Rosalind (a lovely Breanna Pine) and Celia (Katie Nunez, smokin' hot) flee into the forest to find Rosalind's dad (the delightful Mike Sulprizio), long ago banished by his brother, the reigning Duke (Sulprizio again). But before they skip town, the girls catch sight of Orlando (Matt Merchant), an extremely tasty piece of eye candy — particularly when he bares it all in a wrestling match to defend his own disgraced father's honor and piss off his scheming brother, Oliver (a hilarious Rick Batalla). So into the woods we go, all in the name of love.

But besides the all-around tight vocals, irresistible live band (music director Eric Heinly, Thomas Dryaton, Mitchell Sigman,

and Pocket Honore), inventive dance numbers (choreographed by Christine Lakin), and sweet design touches (credit particularly to costume designer Sharon McGunigle) that give strength to *As U2 Like It*, Walker and company have a few surprises up their stylish sleeves. Local, pop culture, and political targets are responsible for a few bull's-eyes here. So are spot-on performers Audrey Siegel and Matthew Morgan doing Shakespeare proud; the exciting Beth Kennedy — who as Jaques delivers an Ages of Man speech that takes our breath away; and an unexpected visit from Jesus H. Christ (Travis Clark). So if you're up for some fun in Burbank and still haven't found what you're looking for....

Presented by the Troubadour Theater Company at the Falcon Theatre, 4252 Riverside Dr., Burbank. Repertory schedule. Aug. 22-Oct. 12. (818) 955-8101. www.troubie.com.

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