

BACKSTAGE

THE ACTOR'S RESOURCE



Shag With a Twist

By Travis Michael Holder

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There's a kind of whimsical identity to Los Angeles style in this first decade of our new millennium, and no one defines that more distinctly than Josh Agle, the local artist known as Shag. From his quirky artwork displayed in ultra-cool counterculture galleries to the graphics for the new pink Panther Movie, Agle couldn't be hotter. His signature world, an idyllic two-dimensional cartoon version of the 1960s celebrated around modular Scandinavian fireplaces in hipster cocktail lounges sure to thrill Austin Powers, has been reverently captured onstage by Cynthia Bradley with the expert help of scenic designer Douglas D. Smith and costumer Joel Berlin.

The delightfully silly setting for Bradley's bookless musical is a Tupperware party at the chic mid-century home of Othal and Eldon (Katie Russell and Jamie Benson, who gives the show's most Chaplin-like comedic turn), where Shag-adelic patrons dance the "Twist" and drink endless martinis, until one of the beautiful people is done in by a giant corkscrew. Enter a dour coroner (Jesse Schoem), a bumbling detective (Shell Bauman), and their fez-wearing simian sidekick (the knockout Raul Machorro, a guy surely made of rubber), who search for the killer as the partygoers blithely dance and sing around them.

There's not much point here, but who cares? Bradley's tongue-in-cheek choreography is performed by a bright, youthfully exuberant ensemble, kids who have the moves to make the infectious period score by Chris Lang and Cesar Benitez instantly classic—and remind anyone over a certain age of the days when our parents listened to Martin Denny's Quiet Village and drank highballs under a thatched roof in basement fallout shelters turned into rumpus rooms. With a hilarious singing duo called The Twinkie Buns (Erin Stutland and Patrick Barnitt) flawlessly capturing the sounds and moves of Elvis-like former pop stars relegated to a dim lounge in downtown. And Smith's design for the show spilling into the grand LATC lobby, complete with tiki bars serving Scorpions at intermission, this may not be Arthur Miller, but, boy, is it ever fun.

"Shag With a Twist," presented by Jetsetter Productions, LLC in partnership with the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department and the San Pedro City Ballet at the Los Angeles Theatre Center, 514 S. Spring St., L.A. Thu.-Sat. 8 p.m. Mar. 18-June 11. \$25-45. (888) 515-7424.