

Peanuts characters grow into teenagers in 'Dog Sees God'

BY DAVID BURKE
Eagle correspondent

If the characters look and sound a little familiar, that's part of the point of "Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead."

Billed as an "unauthorized parody" the comedy-drama, which opens this weekend at Roxy's Downtown, did something that cartoonist Charles Schulz could never do — let his Peanuts characters grow into teenagers and experience real-world problems.

"It takes characters that

are really familiar to us all and puts them in situations that might make us a little uncomfortable but are still familiar nonetheless," said Max Wilson, who plays C.B. (no character is given the same name as in the comic strip). "They're put into some pretty extreme places, but at least one of the characters in the show you can relate with on a level with their struggle or the way they handle that struggle."

Madeleine White, who plays C.B.'s Sister (the character names aren't always creative), said she used monologues from

"Dog Sees God" for auditions, and appreciates the real-world problems it confronts.

"It's very reminiscent of growing up and being in high school," White said. "That's what I really enjoy about it."

The rest of the cast includes Sam Warner, Haylee Couey, Matthew Hale, Austin Ragusin, Sarah Wine and Ashley Lauren.

Both Wilson and White are fans of the Peanuts movies and comic strips, and don't see any offense in using the animated figures everyone is familiar with to tell the story.



Courtesy photo

"Dog Sees God, Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead" is playing at Roxy's Downtown through Jan. 27.

"It's almost as if there's a story the playwright wanted to tell, and using these familiar characters was the best vehicle to pull it off," Wilson said of Bert Royal, also known for the teen movie comedy "Easy A."

Director Rick Bumgardner said the script confronts issues many teenagers are facing today, including high

school violence, teenage suicide, sexual promiscuity, homophobia, germaphobia, substance abuse, alcoholism and eating disorders.

"Dog Sees God," Bumgardner said, is taking "characters that we know and love and putting them in these horrendous situations, that unfortunately our teenagers find them-

'Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead'

When: Jan. 11-27, performances at 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays, Jan. 13 and 27 and 6 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20

Where: Roxy's Downtown, 412 ½ E. Douglas

Tickets: \$20-\$30, by calling the box office at 316-265-4400

selves in today."

Due to its language and themes, the show is rated R, he said.

Bumgardner said he was unfamiliar with the play, which premiered in 2004, until three different theater acquaintances suggested that he not only read but direct the show.

"It was something I wanted to sink my chops into," he said.

Unfortunately, the comic strip's favorite beagle did not make the transition into the play.

"Snoopy was my hero," Bumgardner said. "When I read on the very first page he was dead, I almost didn't go on."

Bumgardner said he doesn't view "Dog Sees God" as a sacrilege to any of Schulz's characters.

"I think our audiences will smile," he said. "I don't think they'll go, 'You can't do this to the Peanuts characters.' 'It'll startle some people, and it'll make people laugh,' he added.

"Dog Sees God" also serves as the first of what Bumgardner calls an "unfiltered" entry in each season, with challenging issues and adult language.

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