



After World War II was over, we saw an increase in the American population thus characterizing that peace, love making lovers as 'the baby boomer' generation. They of course in turn gave birth to what is known as Generation X bringing a new age emergence of punk rock, grunge, and apparently both awesome and tasty cocktails. Generation X gave us millennials.

Ugh. Millennials. A person who barely has reached adulthood in the 21st century. They are lazy and entitled; liberal and progressive. Tech savvy. Confident. Achievement oriented. Question authority and expect too much from their employers. So, what has this generation ever given to any other generation? Hocus Pocus. You're welcome.

Millenials grew up watching the film starring **Bette Midler**, **Sarah Jessica Parker**, and **Kathy Najimy**. Not only did we watch it in 1993 when we were between the ages of three and fifteen, but we watched aired re-runs every Halloween afterwards. My generation fell in love with the characters, the lines, the sense of familiarity since we were nurtured and pampered by our parents which coincides with the comfort of one of our favorite holidays: Halloween. Luckily, this Halloween, Roxy's Downtown presents an unauthorized parody version of the beloved film in their current production of Hocus Pocus running from October 11th to November 3rd. I said 'version.' Not the 'virgin' who lit the candle.

Rick Bumgardner, artistic director of Roxy's Downtown, updates the film in a fun stage adaptation that is shorten and clipped for just the right amount of time to cram in a quick hour and a half show with one intermission. Interspersed with primarily 90's music and references,

this modern-day production is appealing to any generation who is lucky enough to secure a ticket.

For starters, the set designed by J Branson, gives the perception of a traditional, proscenium stage with three drywall wings for entrances and exits with an extra hanging flat above in which the setting and time is projected above audience heads in red font. There are other set pieces, quite grand in scale for the space, that slide in and out to create other scenery such as graveyards. The rest of the show, however, is spear-headed by a Wichita star-studded cast primarily with **Jen Bechter**, Julia Faust, and Jenny Mitchell at the helm filling the shoes for our three beloved Sanderson sisters in order to re-create iconic performances in the Disney film.

Even though this Hocus Pocus is updated, do not be alarmed. The original gist of the plot is still there. There are, though, updates worth mentioning. Right off the bat, recorded sound cues can be heard referencing **Sarah Jessica Parker's** other famed success Sex in the City which is then followed by En Vogue's 'Free Your Mind' sung perfectly acapella by Bechter, Faust and Mitchell. Musical mashups happen quite a bit throughout the show including 'Backstreet's Back' to signal the return of Winnie, Sarah and Mary with choreography in the audience also done by the Sanderson witch trio. Not only do the three lead witches, sing well together, they also do just as well for individual solos. Julia Faust shows strong belting chops for 'Lady Marmalade' whereas Mitchell catches up in act two with her long-awaited solo 'I Need a Hero.' Credit is especially due to Bechter for mimicking Bette Midlers' style for 'I Put a Spell on You' while annunciating better than the original diva herself for lyrics 'ah say ento pi, alpha mabi upendi.' She even gets another funny solo in the 'prison school for children' with **Alicia Keys'** 'This Girl is on Fire' substituting the word 'girl' for 'witch.' Ultimately, iconic comedy and dialogue is still present, particularly Mary's vacuum as a form of unorthodox transportation and Winnifred's cat calls to her spell book.

Rounding out the cast includes Sarah Wine (Allison), **Austin Stang** (Max Dennison), Tanza Cochran (Dani), Teri Mott (Thackery Binx/Binx the Cat), **Injoy Fountain** (Mr. Binx, Student, Jay, Mom, Zombie, Satan) and Matthew Hale (Elijah/Miss Olin/Ernie/Dad/Billy/Penny.)

Wine is charming as Allison and sings her solo 'Skater Boy' with adolescent poise and ease. Furthermore, her melodramatic nosebleed is perfect and gives the other theatre in town a run for their money. **Austin Stang** returns to Wichita from the Kansas City area as Max. Stang was just as charming opposite Wine particularly for his solo 'Creep' by Radiohead. Tanza Cochran is a fresh-faced actress to the Wichita theatre community and plays young faced Dani quite well with striking features similar to the young actress in the movie. Teri Mott was very enjoyable as Binx the cat with humor whom at one point commented with fervor telling Dani 'to go away' with colorful, adult language. **Injoy Fountain** had lovely moments as well showcasing her voice at the top of act two as Satan. The icing on the cake, however, came from Matthew Hale who played multiple characters in various stages of drag and character spectrum. He was hilarious as the teacher at the beginning of the show, rapped 'Ice, Ice, Baby' later on, and then played the zombie named Billy. The only suggestion for the entire company would be to commit to the comedy and direction given to them no matter how farcical it can be.

The skypit orchestra conducted by Andrew Bowers was able to be heard without overpowering the actors, while sound aided in their projection by Scott Olney. Unfortunately, the space itself being a hundred-year-old structure always seems to eat up any kind of sound, but everything was well balanced. Choreography by Mitchell was sharp and clean, particularly for the song 'I'm Coming Out' and the ensemble collectively executed the moves just fine. Costumes and props by Dora Arbuckle were both fitting and comical. Staging by Bumgardner was appropriate as well, especially when the performers were in the school library rotating and scooting around a chalk board. That is the kind of blocking I truly enjoy. It was different yet simple but overall creative.