



Boy this show really takes me back to my youth, dancing the night away in clubs, and working as a dancer in local drag shows!

With a book by **Stephan Elliott** and **Allan Scott**, and a slew of 70s dance floor anthems including It's Raining Men, I Will Survive, Hot Stuff, Boogie Wonderland, Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, and I Love The Nightlife, it's hard not to sit still in your seat. You'll want to sing and dance along!

Based on the iconic 1994 film of the same name, Priscilla Queen of the Desert follows two drag queens (Tick and Adam) and a transsexual (Bernadette) who buy a run-down old bus they name Priscilla, and set out on a road trip across the Australian Outback because Tick's ex-wife invited him to perform his drag show at her resort on the other side of the continent. Tick is hesitant to tell Bernadette, a former performing icon whose best days are behind her, and Adam, a rambunctious young troublemaker, his own personal reasons for taking the trip. Their journey is marked by colorful hijinx and the sober reality of the violence Trans, Drag, and openly gay folk endure on a daily basis.

Director Rick Bumgardner keeps the action moving and doesn't let the dramatic moments succumb to the hilarious and frequently arch camp the actors dish out. Choreographer Courtney Wages loads the performers full of Fosse and Paris is Burning moves for some ever changing, sexy pictures. Paul Graves' musical direction was great, the ensemble blended well and the band was tight. J Branson's scenic design is cute and campy, from giant makeup mirrors backstage to a quick transition to Priscilla (the bus) and other locations. The set is

loaded with festive beach colors, which are bright and fun, and remind us that even when there is despair there is also hope.

The costumes by **Chadwick Armstrong** are gorgeous, colorful, and plentiful. Standouts include the iconic silver cape that waves in the breeze, worked by an unknown individual offstage as Felicia rides on top of Priscilla (the bus), the Flip-flop dress, the pool noodle wigs, the colorful overalls worn by the chorus while removing hateful graffiti from Priscilla, and of course, the ostrich costumes in the finale!

Brad Thomison is so natural and welcoming as Miss Understanding; he opened the show in a fabulous Rainbow outfit, and closed the show with a jaw dropping ample bosom. Denver Frankhouser's turn as Felicia was very nice, and his Drag was convincing. Sarah Wine was lovely as Tick's ex-wife, and her drunk Australian lady gave me a good belly laugh. Chayston Simmons has a great voice, and he played Tick with genuine sensitivity. Patty Yoon plays Cynthia, Bob's mail order bride/Thai ping pong ball artist whom he leaves to join Bernadette. I'm still trying to decide if the scene/character was PC or not, as it took me a hot minute to catch on. I always heard about the ping pong ball stories but never knew if they were true or an urban legend.

Sophia Hillman has many scene stealing moments as Diva #1, and her Greek Chorus, Khyah Van Es as Diva #3, and Elaine Watson as Diva #2, wrapped the audience up and pulled them in with those 70s dance hits in sensational fashion. Their blend was great thanks to excellent musical direction by Paul Graves.

Tom Frye's Bob the Mechanic is so subtle and sweet, and not Tom's usual over the top caricature, but a poignant portrayal of a man who is stuck in a rough marriage and finds his salvation when he meets his crush from decades ago - Bernadette (**Shaun-Michael Morse**) and falls in love. Shaun-Michael's Bernadette perpetually waxes philosophical and carries a world weary acceptance of all that her Trans Life entails. She reminds us to "never forget the cost of choices," and "the city is

the safest place for us." It is so satisfying to see her finally in a relationship she can relax in. Shaun-Michael does a beautiful job here, and portrays Bernadette with a tough sensitivity that often lies behind the beautiful fantasies proffered by Drag life.

Finally, a special acknowledgement to Keaton Mohr, who plays Benji, Tick's son. Keaton's a triple threat; he has a strong voice, a natural acting style, and is a wonderful dancer. I hope we see more of him.

Coming next to the Roxy's Downtown Stage? Heathers, which will run July 6-23rd.

Priscilla, Queen of the Desert runs until May 22nd. You can still catch the show this Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 8pm, with a special "It's a Drag it's Sunday" Brunch before the 2pm show on Sunday. Tickets for all shows are \$30, which can be reserved by calling (316) 265-4400. Roxy's Downtown is located at 412 1/2 E. Douglas Ave., Wichita, KS 67202 Email: admin@roxysdowntown.com