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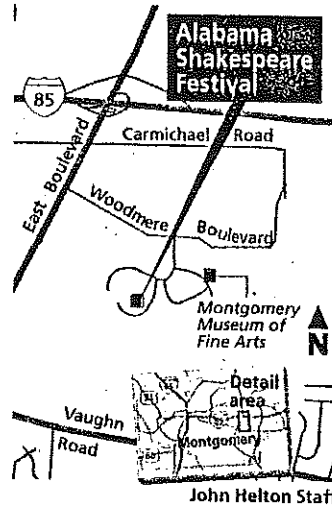
ARTS

Production of 'Forever Plaid' brings golden oldies to ASF stage

By Robyn Bradley Litchfield
Montgomery Advertiser

WANT TO GO?

- What: "Forever Plaid"
- When: Previews at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 11-13; Opens Jan. 14 and runs through Feb. 20; showtimes are 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Tuesday-Thursday; 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 2 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- Where: Alabama Shakespeare Festival
- Admission: \$20-\$30, depending on date; discounts for seniors, military personnel, students and groups of 10 or more
- Information: 271-5353



make the play happen," Justis said. "When mistakes are made — and they are made on purpose — the audience reacts, and the actors react to that."

Working on the show has been a lot of fun, said Paul Woodson, who portrays Sparky. Until he was hired, Woodson did not know much about the production.

"We have had a lot of music to learn. I had heard some of these old standards, about half I guess," Woodson said.

He said that while he loves the singing, he also enjoys the character he portrays. Sparky is quite the clown.

Daniel Siford, on the other hand, portrays Frankie, the group's leader.

"Singing the four-part harmony is a challenge, but playing the leader, which makes it an extra challenge," Siford said.

It also has been a challenge for Allie Laurie, whose voice must reach the highest notes. Laurie portrays Jinx.

belt and is serving as the understudy for three of the roles at ASF.

"These are songs the audience hasn't heard in a long time, and they bring back some great memories," Justis said. "I was a little surprised and delighted to hear the particular songs we do. This is not Chuck Berry or Elvis.

This is the hit parade music."

It may also surprise the audience that crooners Sparky, Frankie, Jinx and Smudge — along with their piano player and bass player — pull the audience into each performance.

"They (the audience) are addressed directly, and they



Courtesy ASF

Written by Stuart Ross with musical arrangements by James Raitt, the 90-minute musical 'Forever Plaid' is packed with golden oldies like 'Catch a Falling Star,' 'Chain Gang,' 'Crazy 'Bout Ya Baby' and 'Day-O.'

'Forever Plaid' Captures musical memories

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"We have been talking about the whole 'jinx thing,' and I figure it's because I sing the highest in the group," said Laurie, who reaches the F above high C.

Laurie's training is in opera, but he enjoys musical theater as well. He especially enjoys this show, filled with the music he grew up on, being on the tail end of the baby-boomer generation.

"I had never seen it ('Forever Plaid') and never even got a CD to listen to it," he said. "It has been a nice little discovery."

And then there is Smudge, who eats fire — real fire — as part of his routine, but is the least choreographically inclined of the four.

"Smudge is always going one way when he should be going another," said Bill Daelin Gross, who portrays Smudge, the same role he had in the Fulton Opera House (Pennsylvania) production a few years ago.

This challenge only gives Smudge more room to grow, he said.

"All four guys change, but Smudge goes through one of the



The Alabama Shakespeare Festival's production of 'Forever Plaid' previews Jan. 11-13 and opens Jan. 14. The production runs through Feb. 13.

most visible transformations of all the Plaids," Gross said. "The music is great, but to add this wonderful story, of four boys growing up, makes it even more powerful."

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