



Woolly Gets Its War On

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At the Friday night performance of Woolly Mammoth Theater's production of *Get Your War On*, the audience found just about every moment of the work uproariously funny. Was it because the lines were genuinely clever? Was it because they agreed so wholeheartedly with the author's liberal stance? Was it a much-needed release after enduring years upon years of injustice from the Bush administration? It's hard to say, but it begs the question whether the play would receive the same reaction from a demographically different crowd.

Welcome to the contentious world of overtly political theater, where preaching to the choir is common, and often therapeutic, but those on the opposing side of the political spectrum are left far less impressed. *Get Your War On*, where the political does not stay comfortably in the realm of undertones, fits easily into this category: Bush-bashers will be thrilled. The Christian Right will be alienated. The apolitical theatergoer will fall somewhere in-between.

The work is a stage adaption of the comic strip of the same name, by David Rees, which has been featured for years in *Rolling Stone* magazine. The endeavor is both an inspired idea and a well-executed one - the comic strip's lines lend themselves far better to

sarcastic or emotive readings than they do to the page ("Who has time to declare war when so many bombs are being dropped?" for example, doesn't read as the most subtle of statements, but these actors can lend the necessary weight or lightness to prevent it from falling flat). During the show, we are taken through six years of war-driven events that have plagued the U.S. (as well as the corresponding comic strips that commented on them), and the quick-witted ironic detachment of the lines moves the show along at first at a satisfying pace, though around the time 2004 rolls around, you may find yourself hoping for a little more variety in the script.

The opposing side of the political spectrum isn't lent even a smidgen of consideration here. It's arguable whether the author has any obligation to do this, and in some ways, the committed stance is a courageous one. But if you're looking for balance, don't look to this work - while people can often laugh at satirical depictions of themselves if they're justified or on target, the viciousness of the attacks here cannot be argued. This is no-holds-barred, genuinely pissed-off theater.

The show's players heavily make use of the five projector screens that show the comic strips themselves, as well as some other visual gags (a "Fuck Count" that tallies the number of profanities uttered in a segment is one amusing scene). Some awkwardness (intentional or otherwise) comes out of the choice to have the players emulate the poses of their corresponding comic characters when the strips are being shown on the projector; a less literal interpretation may not have looked as forced here. The show is occasionally broken up by an interlude or two, whether they be musical (often absurd, but a nice break from the action) or analytical - a look at the issue of other offensive and "offensive" cartoons which ran (or could have ran) around the same time as the title strip is a show highlight.

Get Your War On's actors are from the Austin, Texas-based comedy troupe The Rude Mechanicals, and they take nicely to the material. Lana Lesley could easily receive a Queen of Deadpan Award; her dry, bemused delivery is frequently unexpected in its rhythm, and consistently hilarious. The men onstage have an affable rapport with each other, and Amy Miley brings an appealing sense of bitterness (if such a thing exists) to her performance.

Though not every line earns its laughs, there are enough good gags here to make the work an entertaining work in general, rather than merely a didactic exercise.

But ask a NeoCon the same question, and they might give you a different answer.

Get Your War On runs through Oct. 14 at Woolly Mammoth. Tickets are available [online](#).