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Thursday, September 12, 2002

The Buzz

Preview: Blue Room to debut original 'rock theater' production

By BRET LUEDER - Special to The Buzz

It's not a rock opera. And it's not a musical. The stage play, said 35-year-old Aaron Lyon, the brainchild behind this newest Blue Room Theatre offering titled "Hollywood Outsider," is a production of what he prefers to call "rock theater."

"A rock opera or a musical suggests to me that the characters will break into song and carry the action throughout the songs," said Lyon as we sat with his two daughters over hot chocolate, tea and bear claws at a local coffeehouse. "But I really wanted to keep the rock concert atmosphere intact and then add the actors and the scenes to it."

It was one song Lyon wrote more than four years ago that gave rise to his vision. The song, "Moving Away," chronicles the plight of a young boy named Sky and his mother as they flee to Hollywood from their abusive

husband/father. The subsequent eight songs on the play's soundtrack CD tell the story of the boy's coming-of-age in the seedy, oftentimes cruel Hollywood underground. But it took one of the Blue Room talents to bring the whole project together.

"Jeremy (Votava, director of 'Hollywood Outsider') listened to my music and the story," said Lyon, "and wrote the scenes in between the songs. He became in tune with my story and what I was trying to project and tied it all together beautifully."

Votava then organized an all-star Blue Room ensemble for the performance. The production features Beau Hirshfield as Sky, Judi Souza as Sky's mother, Slim Barkowska as Sky's abusive father, Quentin Colgan as Sky's stepfather and Michelle Smith as Sky's wife Valerie.

In the meantime, Lyon assembled the band who would perform his classic-rock-styled songs on stage in between scenes. Joining Lyon (guitar and vocals) is drummer Clint Bear, guitarist Spencer Teilmann, bassist Chris Hunter and singers Sara Foster, Giovanna Henery and Judi Souza.

Resembling the eerie, gloomy glory of much of Pink Floyd's work, the songs Lyon wrote come from the same dark corners of his mind where Roger Waters got his ideas for the Floyd's psychedelic romp, "The Wall." Yet Lyon's songs are crafted with a Jeff Buckley-esque neatness much more akin to somber pop sensitivity than a psychedelic anathema. They range from soft and sweet acoustic laments to growling arena-rock rants that span the gamut of emotions.

"I have to admit that the dark side has some attraction for me," he said with a quiet chuckle. "Sky's character just began to speak to me after I wrote 'Moving Away.' And without giving too much away, the band gets

rocking for a couple of numbers. We pretty much cover the bases. And as far as the story, let's just say that once Sky gets to Hollywood at age 7, things just get worse and worse."

The Blue Room Theatre presents "Hollywood Outsider" tonight through Sept. 28. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, with one Sunday evening performance on Sept. 22. Tickets are \$10 general and \$8 for students and seniors on Fridays and Saturdays. On Thursdays all seats are \$5. Call 895-3749 or visit www.blueroomtheatre.com.

2002 Chico Enterprise Record