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“Crazy for You” opens at Riverside Theatre Reply

by Mark Schumann • Arts & Entertainment, Vero Beach
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(<https://indianrivertoday.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/crazy-for-you-2.jpg>) Even though the show didn't end until after 11, audience members hummed and sang and even whistled some happy tunes from “Crazy for You” as they exited Riverside Theatre after opening night on Tuesday.

“It was a three hour play but it didn't seem like three hours,” one man said as he checked his wristwatch in the lobby to make sure.

The audience gave standing ovations to the stars of the musical comedy: Drew Nellessen as Bobby Child, the spoiled son of a New York banker, and Abby Church as Polly Baker, the only woman in the town of Deadrock, Arizona. Bobby is sent to the forlorn desert town by his domineering mother to foreclose on a struggling theatre.

The action moves seamlessly from New York's bustling theatre district to desolate Deadrock with the aid of stunning sets, such as sunset scenes that depict the wide-open spaces of the Southwest. An interior view of Deadrock's theatre, gussied up for a special performance, resembles a fine Impressionistic painting.

“Crazy for You,” based on the 1930s musical “Girl Crazy,” is a timeless tale of romance set in the Great Depression. Cheery songs and exquisite tap routines by high-stepping dancers carry the show. Songs by George Gershwin, with lyrics by his brother, Ira, set the tone, from “I've Got Rhythm” to the catchy syncopation of “Slap that Bass” and “Naughty Baby,” and romantic tunes like “Embraceable You” and “But Not for Me.”

The ensemble singers and dancers include a dozen threadbare, overall-clad denizens of Deadrock. There's a big guy known as Moose as well as a sad sack who keeps saying, "I don't have the energy for that." Of course, they're all country cousins of the city slickers, foils to Bobby and others who descend on the town with a nefarious plan.

The play has its farcical moments and, occasionally, some slapstick humor.

"I haven't seen so much excitement here since my horse foaled," one Deadrock resident deadpanned.

"Your horse folded?" another one replied.

In another exchange, a woman tells a man, "If you were my husband, I'd kill myself."

"Quick! Find a minister!" he replies.

The grand finale was a sight to see, with the players ascending an Art Deco-style staircase set in front of a starry night sky and singing their hearts out. By that time, audience members who weren't singing were clapping or tapping or humming along.

"Crazy for You" played on Broadway for 1,600 performances and won a Tony Award for Best Musical. It also enjoyed a long run in London's West End.

It will play at Riverside through Feb. 1. Tickets start at \$35 and can be purchased by calling the Riverside box office at 772-231-6990 or going online to www.riversidetheatre.com (<http://www.riversidetheatre.com>). Performances are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; with matinees on Wednesdays and select Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 2 p.m.

Riverside's 2014-15 season is sponsored by Croom Construction Co., Fidelity Investments, Health First, Inc.; O'Haire Fessler Group – Merrill Lynch Wealth Management; Jaguar Land Rover of the Treasure Coast, Northern Trust, Indian River Press Journal, 93.7 The Breeze, Vatlant Honda, Marriott SpringHill Suites and Vero Beach