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# Still greasy after all these years (http://lansingcitypulse.com/articles.sec-234-1-Arts-and-Culture.html)

## MSU breathes new life into 'Grease'

BY DAVID WINKELSTERN (HTTP://LANSINGCITYPULSE.COM/BY-AUTHOR-299-1.HTML)

"Grease," as a cultural phenomenon, is inescapable. In 1978, a sanitized "Grease" film helped cement the musical's place in Americana. More recently, Fox viewers were treated to "Grease Live," starring Julianne Hough, Vanessa Hudgens and Aaron Tveit. Before that was NBC's "Grease: You're the One That I Want," a reality competition show with starring Broadway roles on the line.

Since the original show by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey debuted in Chicago in 1971, adaptations of "Grease" have been performed on Broadway, local theaters and high school auditoriums from coast to coast. We've been getting "Grease" jobs for over four decades. Versions of the play sometimes seem as common as round-shaped oats inside a Cheerios box. Apparently, its teen angst, raw language, female sexuality and rock 'n' roll-infused themes warrant a never-ending life. MSU Department of Theatre's latest production is yet another resus citation of "Grease." It might seem that seeing yet another resurrection of the familiar play would be as fun as watching a rerun of a rerun.

Instead, the MSU production gave the well-known play a breath of fresh appeal – thanks in large part to its energetic, young, energetic, vocally astute, energetic, skilled dancing cast. The 22 members radiated an enthusiasm and charm that left no feeling of a winded redo. (Did I mention that they were energetic?)

Shelby Antel as Sandy, Lukas Jacob as Danny and Katelyn Wilson as Rizzo gave broadcast-worthy performances. The trio's singing and dancing really shined. A sparse-yet-stylish set allowed for room for them to wail and prance – even with the occasional appearance of a real car body.

Numerous scene-stealers – such as Josh Cassidy as the nerdy Eugene and Bethany Heimlein as Patty-in-crutches – added their own individuality to the show. Blaine Mizer as Teen Angel, however, was the master pilferer of audience attention. His flamboyant, over-the-top stage delivery was a one-of-a-kind display. Mizer's ability to effortlessly reach ever-elevated and extended notes set a new bar for the role.

The youthfulness of the MSU cast and ensemble brought a welcome charm. So many versions of "Grease" force us to accept far-from-teen actors as high schoolers. The MSU actors, acting like hormone-addled, goofy, emotional, not-so-mature students of Rydell High, seemed more

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natural.

Jonathan William David, as Vince Fontaine, looked the part of an older DJ, complete with a shaved head and suit. David also deserved mention for his slick, vocally acrobatic “on air” inclusions. The seven-piece band conducted by Dave Wendelberger also merits special praise. Both the director and choreographer certainly earned kudos – the same person, Brad Willcuts, held both positions.

The production uses the script from the original, long-running Broadway version of “Grease.” Be aware that some of those words are explicit, including sexual dialogue and frequently exploding “F-bombs” – the greasier stuff we never heard squeezed into a “Grease” movie or TV show.

“Grease”

MSU Department of Theatre 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 20–Thursday, April 21; 8 p.m. Friday, April 22; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, April 23; 2 p.m. Sunday, April 24 \$22/\$20 seniors and faculty/\$17 students/\$10 children Pasant Theatre, Wharton Center 750 E. Shaw Lane, East Lansing (517) 432-2000, whartoncenter.com

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