

# Weston's 'Five Guys Named Moe' brought the audience to its feet

By Kevin O'Toole  
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WESTON - Weston Playhouse Theatre Company's second production this season on its main stage, "Five Guys Named Moe," celebrates the "jump blues" music of Louis Jordan, a popular African-American vocalist, saxophonist and bandleader of the '40s, and early '50s, who influenced much of what later became known as "rhythm and blues," as well as early rock 'n roll. Last Thursday's preview performance had 'em dancing in the aisles. Literally.

To frame an evening of over twenty musical numbers either penned or made popular by Louis Jordan, playwright Clarke Peters sets his play in a bare-bones apartment into which its lone occupant, Nomax, stumbles in after another in a series of benders.

Nomax, played by Weston

favorite C. Mingo Long, pines for his Lorraine, with whom he is on the outs. Out of his stupor, as well as the icebox, sofa and doors, emerge a quintet of kinetic energy, the erstwhile five guys named Moe, who proceed to serenade, dance, shuck and jive within the confines of the tenement, and later at the nightclub next door, in order to knock some sense into Nomax.

No, it's not much of a plot, but one that works and anyway, what matters is the music, and what music it is. Some of the numbers, such as "Choo Choo Ch' Boogie," were familiar while many others, such as "Early in the Morning," were not. That's okay. On several occasions, audience members were gently cajoled to join in, either singing, clapping or bumping in a conga line. It was live, and I do mean live, entertainment. No sitting on one's hands allowed.

Participatory theatre can be a

risky business, but Director Tim Fort and his talented cast pulled it off with ease. As "Big Moe", Andre Montgomery got the joint jumpin' after intermission with his rendition of "Caledonia," and as "Four-Eyed Moe," Jerome Lucas Hermann was hilarious as the "chicken" in "Nobody Here But Us Chickens".

As "Little Moe", Keldon Lavar Price showcased his smooth tenor voice in "Choo Choo Ch' Boogie" and "Saturday Night Fish Fry". Mr. Price's boyish enthusiasm and acrobatic dancing meshed well with Erick Pinnick, who, as "No Moe", exhibited some toe-tapping of his own. As "Eat Moe", Korey Jackson displayed his deep singing voice with "Messy Bessy".

As "Nomax", C. Mingo Long put his personal stamp on a role that in another's hands might have been just filler. Mr. Long imbued the drunk or hungover Nomax

with a dignity that permitted the audience to see why his character's redemption was worth the trouble. His distinctive, rich baritone was reflected again in "Early in the Morning" and the reprise to "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying."

The walls of Russell Parkman's set of the apartment, a purple haze devoid of right angles, matched the evening's jazz rhythms and Nomax's dream encounter with the five Moes. Ditto for the cartoonish bright red and yellow suits for the five Moes designed by Ilona Somogyi. Music Director Ron L. Hackel kept the harmonies and instrumentals tight, and let the good times roll.

Performances of "Five Guys Named Moe" continue at the Weston Playhouse through July 23. For ticket information, call (802) 824-5288 or go on-line at [www.westonplayhouse.org](http://www.westonplayhouse.org).