

ARTS



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BY JIM LOWE

Weston mixes fun with rhythm-and-blues

Is there a better way to ensure audience participation?

"Ladies, if you've ever cheated on your husband or your boyfriend, don't sing!" Big Moe chided the audience at Weston Playhouse Sunday evening.

"Men, if you can't stand the woman next to you, don't sing!" Did it work? You bet!

This was a small part of the audience participation in "Five Guys Named Moe," at Weston Playhouse through July 23 - a very small part. But telling more would give away the fun.

"Five Guys Named Moe" is a fast-paced musical based on the rhythm-and-blues of Louis Jordan, whose music influenced the likes of B.B. King, Chuck Berry, Bill Haley, James Brown and Ray Charles, creating the "jump style" that paved the way for rock 'n' roll. The award-winning show was created by

Clarke Peters, and first appeared in London. Weston Playhouse has created a slick, very entertaining production of "Five Guys Named Moe."



The cast of "Five Guys Named Moe" rehearses at the Weston Playhouse (Back row) Jerome Lucas, Harman and Corey Jackson (Middle) Andre Montgomery, Keidon LaVar Price and Erick Pinnick (Bottom) C. Mingo Long

The fun begins when Nomax, in a drunken haze, returns to his apartment after his girlfriend has ditched him. When he goes to turn off the radio, it warns him: "Don't touch that dial!" But, Nomax ignores the warning, and suddenly there are five very flashy men in his apartment - Big Moe, Little Moe, No Moe, Four-Eyed Moe and Eat Moe - and they're there to set him straight. What ensues is a song-and-dance act that is a showcase for African-American musical styles from blues to calypso, and even a harbinger of rap. Some of the better known songs include

"Cal'donia," "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie" and "Is You or Is You Ain't My Baby?" Like most musical revues, it isn't very deep, but it is a lot of fun. Weston's production, directed by Tim Fort, kept the packed house enthralled.

But its initial effect came from the delightfully drunken set by Russell Parkmen, Nomax's apartment as seen through his sodden eyes. Weston's cast of six men sang and danced with flair and aplomb, with traditional but fast-and-fun choreography by Jim Weaver. C. Mingo Long sang and played Nomax with desperation, warmth and tenderness. André Montgomery, as Big Moe, led the group and the audience with a sure hand and an easy wit, and proved no slouch as a singer or a dancer. Neither were the other

Moes, Erick Pinnick, Keidon LaVar Price, Jerome Lucas Harman or Corey Jackson, who performed alone and together with a joy that was contagious.

At Sunday's performance, there were very occasional pitch and ensemble problems, but never pronounced. The pit band was a delight throughout, particularly the warm sax solo by Jeremy Clayton.

Weston's "Five Guys Named

Moe" isn't very deep, but it sure is fun.

Jim Lowe is Arts Editor for the Times Argus

"Five Guys Named Moe" at Weston Playhouse through July 23. Theater is on Route 100 in Weston. Performances are at 8 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, 7 p.m. Sundays, plus 3 p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays. Tickets are \$46-\$28; call (802) 824-5288, or go online to www.westonplayhouse.com.