

## **“HEATWAVE”**

### ***A musical tribute to the legendary ladies of Motown!***

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The May 18 night was cool and breezy but indoors, things were about to crank up to sizzling. No, this was not an air conditioning malfunction but rather the premiere of "Heatwave" by Jon Putzke's Theatre-Go-Round Dinner Theatre at the Quilted Giraffe Restaurant.

The "hot, hot, hot" musical tribute to the legendary ladies of "Motown" and the Motor City where it all began was presented by three superb female vocalist cast members: Shamara Turner, Patty Carreau and Beth McKenzie-Shestak. Although the Motown era of the 1960s coincided with that decade's social change and unrest, this evening was to rekindle happier memories of the Detroit-based recording artists who were always "supremely" coiffed and coutured.

A packed house of 100 dinner theatre patrons seemed more than ready to relive those days when Detroit was producing as many hit songs by black composers including "Smokey" Robinson and the team of Holland-Dozier-Holland as the "Big Three" auto manufacturers were rolling cars off assembly lines.

With a nearly overflowing full house for the show's debut, Putzke happily noted "we have reservations all the way into October for this - Motown!"

He said that intermittently spaced between the songs is an engaging dialogue with the audience by the show's stars which "really tells the story of the rise and flourishing of Motown and later the demise of (Diana Ross and) the Supremes."

"This is fun and there's a lot going on," Putzke promised before the show. "I want to bring back those days of what it was like."

Featuring what later became timelessly memorable melodies the "Motown Sound" became so popular stateside and elsewhere that at its peak, Motown music even supplanted the Beatles in popularity overall worldwide. Founded in Jan. 1959 by Berry Gorday, Jr., black-owned Motown Records featured soul and pop hits that were known for tunefully wonderful melodies, a driving baseline "beat" and often, according to Putzke, a wealth of tambourines.

Although the majority of the Motown top artists were men's groups like the Temptations, Four Tops and Jackson Five, Putzke said, the Motown ladies were hardly slouches in racking up their own hits on the charts.

And just to prove that point, the songstresses of "Heatwave" presented a 40-song show featuring some of the most heralded hits of the Motown era. "Dancing in the Street"; "Baby Love" and, of course, the Martha and the Vandellas blockbuster which inspired the show's name "Heatwave" are just a few of the Motown favorites which became standards for a unique period in America's musical history.

"Heatwave" is unquestionably an enjoyable musical excursion, but the show and its skilled vocalists provide so much more than a mere compendium of Motown hit tunes. The songs jog memories of that time and place. And while the war was raging with horrific casualties in Vietnam and American city streets and campuses were about to explode with the pent-up rage of protest, the music of Motown and the Beatles and the Beach Boys all soothed our torn souls.

When Newark and Watts burned in 1968, we were nonetheless "Dancing in the Street" with Martha Reeves and her Vandellas or trying to copy the precision on-stage choreography of the Four Tops and Temptations. One could smile, sing along and forget the cares of that day. And on opening night of "Heatwave," the audience did.

Though many on hand were past their teens during the Motown era, the music seems to hold a broad and enduring appeal even to those who might be more familiar with rock and roll's inception decade of the 1950s or, perhaps, even back to the "Big Band" era of the 1940s.

A compelling play list of songs for a musical revue is hardly an option and Putzke and his Theatre-Go-Round singers never fail to deliver. But this is, after all, a dinner theatre and without an equally appealing meal, the concept would fail.

Luckily for Theatre-Go-Round patrons, the Quilted Giraffe is an able and equal partner in providing delight for one's senses. Restaurant owner Patrick Tomassi and Chef Kurt Runge this night offered up sumptuous choices for the palate. The experience can only be described as fine dining and, were it not unspeakably gauche, I daresay my companion and I would have literally and gladly licked our plates clean. It is just that good.

Theatre-Go-Round Dinner Theatre is located at the Quilted Giraffe Restaurant at 500 US 1 (south) in Vero Beach. "Heatwave" will perform on Sundays June 22, July 20, Aug. 24, Sept. 21 and Oct. 19 with dinner served at 4:30 p.m. and the show at 6 p.m. The all-inclusive package includes a three-course gourmet dinner, show, tax and gratuity for \$55 per person. Reservations are required. Call 772-252-9341 for information or to reserve by credit card.