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Wednesday, June 18, 2008

Broad Comedy

Theater Preview
By Russ Bickerstaff

Even though sketch comedy can be perilously inconsistent, something vibrant about its imperfection that can add depth to a city's theater community. The all-female sketch group Broadminded, a recent addition to the Milwaukee scene, opened a promising, monthlong show at the Alchemist Theatre on Kinnickinnic Avenue this past March. The group returns to the Alchemist on June 20 with its new show, *Broadminded: Now in 3-D!*

Broadminded brings occasional flashes of brilliance that go well beyond the usual sketch comedy fare. Even in its less successful moments, Broadminded has a passion about its comedy that makes it feel less disposable than other sketch groups.

The group's four members all have day jobs, and they refrain from the sense of desperation that often permeates other sketch groups that are looking to launch a larger show-biz career. Of the four women, two (Megan McGee and Stacy Babi) studied comedy at SecondCity in Chicago; the other two (Melissa Kingston and Anne Graff LaDisa) honed their skills with ComedySportz in Milwaukee.

The humor they staged in their last show was an uneven mix. With no central theme to tie the show together, sketches varied wildly in quality, and the show had an overall feeling of inconsistency. But this time around, the group seems to have a strong overall concept.

According to Kingston, the "Broads" have crafted *Now in 3-D!* as a humorous look at the mass media. Expect comedy centered around news programs, TV shows, commercials and the like. The overall theme may be common fodder for sketch comedy, but Broadminded has shown a capacity for taking the overdone and making it look fresh. The shows in March featured some sophisticated comedy culled from such tried-and-true subjects as competitive workplace atmospheres, pregnancy and partisan politics. Promising segments for *Now in 3-D!* include a jab at increased parental "programming" of children in a recurring "Dateline" segment.

"As always, our aim is to make sure our audience can relate to our sketches and laugh with us at the human condition," Kingston says.

Broadminded: Now in 3-D! runs through June 29 at the Alchemist Theatre. Broadminded will also be performing in the third annual Milwaukee Sketch and Improv Festival at the Off-Broadway Theater this August.

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- Renee: I don't care if he's in one day and out
- Steph: I am so sick of this year after year. Come
- Phil: Favre back? You betcha we want him

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