

A Kind of Gay Fantasia on Keanu

Reeves Themes

by **J. Claude Deering**

Keanu Reeves Saves the Universe reviewed April 9, 2004

Nothing less than theatrical alchemy is taking place upstairs at the People's Improv Theater at 154 West 29th Street. The venue, started by Upright Citizen's Brigade co-founders, Ali Farahnakian and Armando Diaz, offers classes on improvization and sketch writing in addition to running a 50-seat black box theater with a packed repertory season of shows. Friday night was the opening of Amnesia Wars Productions new play *Keanu Reeves Saves the Universe*, written and directed by Rob Reese. This play might best be summarized as "A Kind of Gay Fantasia on Keanu Reeves Themes".

We find our hero playing a concert with his funk-punk band, Dogstar, when he suddenly gets a phone call, "Keanu Reeves, I believe you have been looking for me." The eternally confused Keanu cautiously comes back with, "Waldo"? Dave McKeel plays a brilliant send-up of Lawrence Fishburne's overly eloquent character from *Matrix*, calling himself "Dorpheous" and constantly spewing a line of indulgently obscure rhetoric.

Dorpheous proceeds to trick Keanu into being the hero (and the fall man for) a hilarious ride through galaxies and time periods, spoofing a variety of films such as *Men In Black*, *Star Wars*, *2001*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Star Trek*, in addition to the obvious Reeves films, *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, and of course, *The Matrix*.

Marcus Bonnee plays a lovably oblivious "vintage Keanu", jutting his arms emphatically and affecting the famous Californian lilt. On his quest to save the universe from futuristic corporate rule he comes into contact with the vaudeville stylings of Dr. Dick and Dr. Dan, gay doctors with questionable morals, as well as Captain Angela and her crew of scantily-clad Sulkins, whose weaknesses include "man ass". He falls in love with Ambassador Princess, a "hereditary title that [she] earned." And of course, Keanu must face the ultimate foe, Dark Hater, who turns out to be his future great grandson.

Other highlights of the show include the adorable Amanda Cronk as Lieutenant Obvious, "I'm cute as a button!" Yes you are, Amanda. Sean Dillon is charming as Foley, the earnest sound operator, constantly challenged by the other characters to have appropriate mood music cued up and ready to go. Three cheers for the surprisingly authentic stage recreation of a light saber fight, using color flashlights and smoke machines. Also, the odd musical numbers, which this author won't spoil, are a true delight, adding a sophisticated level of depth to the scope of the show as a whole (look out *Jerry Springer: The Opera*). So beam yourself over to West 29th Street, every Friday night at nine, from now through May 14th. You don't want to miss this one!



Crew (L to R): Elizabeth Kennedy as Schlock, Sean Dillon as Foley, Amanda Cronk as Lt. Obvious, Angela DiGennaro as Captain Angela (seated)
Photo Credit:Jennifer Burland



(L to R): Jared Robinson as Dark Hater, Marcus Bonnee as Keanu Reeves, Upstage (L to R) Elizabeth Kennedy as Schlock, Angela DiGennaro as Captain Angela, Amanda Cronk as Lt. Obvious, Jamie Ansley as Ambassador Princess, Sean Dillon as Foley.
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