

Burt Reynolds Theater's 'Godspell' Makes For A Nice Evening Out

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If a night out at the theater is supposed to be a completely pleasurable experience, let us say right at the start that an evening at the Burt Reynolds Dinner Theater in Jupiter is just that. From the convenient parking to the attractive setting to waiters and waitresses (many aspiring thespians) who are young, attractive and efficient, to the food which is good but not great, it all adds up to a nice night out.

When all is said and done, however, the play's the thing, and their current offering, *Godspell*, is a good one for a certain audience.

In case you are not familiar with this little musical, it is the Gospel according to St. Matthew, a very contemporary "gospel" set, significantly, in a playground.

Godspell is a classic example of this generation's "naive" approach to classic Christian concepts — an attempt to simplify and "humanize." It is a translation of 2,000-year-old religious attitudes into the idiom of young American thought of the '70s.

It is very colorful with, again, that "naif" quality of the Gospel according to coloring book and cut-out paper dolls.

It is, of course, a protest play, but somewhat at the level of

children breaking a window and running, giggling as they go. Then again, it has been said that "a little child shall lead them."

At the Burt Reynolds theater, it is well performed by a bright, lively and talented group of young people who do a tip-top job in this study of determined brotherly love. The acting and voices, both in solos and as a group, is good, with Jeff Coopwood a standard, Ann Morrison displaying a big little voice in the best of Broadway tradition, and David Dannehl displaying a rich baritone.

Truck Milligan, a curly-haired, baby-faced youngster who appeared on Broadway as Alan Strang in 'Equus,' has a difficult role as the Christ. Though his singing voice is weak, he has good presence in his interpretation of the current (or perhaps passing) penchant for juvenile Jesuses.

Another standout in a cast full of personality is kewpiedoll faced Don Stitt, who also did the clever choreography. At 23, he already has a list of theatrical credits as long as your arm.

The show is directed by Tony Stevens, a top Broadway talent whose most recent success was the staging of "Sing Happy," at New York's Avery Fisher Hall starring Liza Minelli, Gwen Verdon and Joel Gray.

Act one is basically a bundle of



Jeff Coopwood and Truck Milligan, he plays Jesus, in 'Godspell' at the Burt Reynolds Dinner Theater

laughs. Act two, dealing as it does with the more serious aspects of Christ's brief life, gets somewhat bathetic. It's one thing to have fun with Christ's life — it's quite another thing to deal with his death. Jesus was not, after all, a sweet-faced teenager.

Though there is quite a bit of

"aw, shucks" dialogue, it is a clever and, at times, very funny show, and the young cast carries it off well. Adults in such roles would be ludicrous. So if you can enter into the, uh, holy spirit of all this, you can have a real good time.

Ticket information can be obtained by calling 746-5566.