

Thursday, Nov. 24, 2005

GOOD GIMMICK

'Redneck Tenors' so stupid it's funny

By MARK LOWRY
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH -- You know you're a redneck tenor if you can yodel in the middle of *La donna e mobile* from the Verdi opera *Rigoletto* -- and not mess up your mullet or spill a drop of Lone Star.

And you're definitely a redneck tenor if you've got a crowd-pleasing new show on your hands, one that could potentially become a hit with audiences that would usually rather sit in grandstands than in seats at a chichi place like Bass Performance Hall.

3 Redneck Tenors -- *A New Musical Adventure*, which originated in Grapevine, ended the first leg of an American tour at Bass Hall on Wednesday night, and the representatives of the Koozie crowd -- a respectable turnout, considering it was the night before Thanksgiving -- ate up every gimmicky minute of it.

Conceived and written by Matthew Lord, with musical arrangements by Craig Bohmler, Tenors introduces us to Billy Bob (Steven Sanders), Billy Joe (Lord) and Billy Billee (Keith Buterbaugh), yokels from Paris, Texas, who happen to have legit operatic voices. The enterprising Colonel (Dinny McGuire, who is also the narrator) hears them and books them in venues nationwide, from rasslin' matches to Medieval Times to a Masonic Lodge to a livestock show.



Starring in 3 Redneck Tenors, which came to Bass Hall on Wednesday night, are, from left, Dinny McGuire as the Colonel, Keith Buterbaugh as Billy Billee, Steven Sanders as Billy Bob and Matthew Lord as Billy Joe

Dreaming of fame, the boys agree. They also want to raise money for grieving widow and Hee Haw-esque hottie Edna Mae (Lindsay Hilliard), who lost her cousin-husband Billy Ray in a tragic wood-chipper incident.

Some of the so-stupid-they're-funny bits include a drag number (as the 3 Tenorinas) doing *You Light Up My Life* and a rendition of *Please Kind Sir* in nonflattering tie-dyed Spandex. Hearing YMCA sung in operatic harmony, complete with the arms-as-letters choreography, is also a hoot.

Even funnier: an over-enunciated Hound Dog and an intriguing mixture of *Ave Maria* and *Dixie*. There are also serious moments, including the terrific Carnegie Hall finale of *Nessun dorma* from *Turandot*.

Every time these guys sing, all is well with the world. The collective resumes of Buterbaugh, Sanders and Lord include serious Broadway and opera credits. Vocally, they're phenomenally talented. (Their physical comedy and timing ain't bad, either.)

With less Foxworthy and more Pavarotti, 3 Redneck Tenors could really go places.