

March 29, 2012

pulsetheater

Rocker magicians do the trick

By ELISABETH VINCENTELLI

A magic show is a magic show. You've got illusions, mentalist feats and sleights of hand. Animals appear out of thin air. Someone may or may not be cut by a sharp blade.

The funny, inventive "Elephant Room" has all that, but it looks like a throwback to 1980s MTV, "This Is Spinal Tap" and "Wayne's World." Every detail is pitch-perfect: the set's chintzy rec-room vibe (on cinder blocks, of course), Kool-Aid as a key prop, freestyle electro on the soundtrack.

Best of all are the magicians, who go by the names Louie Magic, Daryl Hannah and Dennis Diamond. These mustachioed dudes may look like doofus extras in a hair-metal video, but, like Steve Miller, they sure can rock the abracadabra.

As you may have guessed, "Elephant Room" isn't playing in a casino, but at edgy St. Ann's Warehouse. And it wasn't cooked up by emulators of David Copperfield, but by a team with arty résumés.

Co-creator Steve Cuiffo was last seen doing Lenny Bruce's Carnegie Hall act verbatim. His partners Trey Lyford and Geoff Sobelle gave us the intricately designed, hilarious shows "all wear bowlers" and "machines machines machines machines machines machines machines machines."

The trio also got help from contemporary-dance vets in the director, Paul Lazar, and choreographer, David Neumann.

This may reek of hipster high jinks, but you never get the feeling that the show looks down on magic — it's just reframed.

An elaborate routine includes a couple of distinct tricks. The first is a spin on three-card monte, but done with an egg.

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Also popular was the mind-reading demonstration, in which Diamond guessed the name of a random theatergoer scribbled on a piece of paper.

Because there is audience participation, of course. But it's OK since magic shows and Hugh Jackman performances are the only time this stunt is welcome.

In fact, the single funniest scene involves a woman plucked from the bleachers.

Hannah used that willing victim to stage an elaborate set piece involving a motorcycle ride, George Michael, and Magic and Diamond — dressed up as an angel and demon — tempting their buddy.

Did I mention the white tiger?
It's enough to make you believe in
make-believe all over again.

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Audiences will be charmed by "Elephant Room" stars Daryl Hannah (from left), Louie Magic and Dennis Diamond, who mix a "Wayne's World" style with impressive magic tricks.