



Monroe Still Classic After All These Years

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by James Sims



Our culture thrives on celebrity driven pulp, with the rise and fall of the American aristocracy - typically movie stars, though today it also covers those disgraceful celebuntants - feeding our enduring hunger for gossip and blazoning across the headlines. It is not often that one of those fallen idols' stories resonates beyond the 15 minutes of morbid fame. Honestly, who in their right mind cares that Britney Spears turned out to be the incompetent one in her marriage? Okay, maybe I do just a little.

Yet every so often a star comes along garnering respect and truly backing up their notoriety with at least a smidgen of talent. Add to that a tragic denouement with a couple high-profile flings, and what emerges is a story worth telling. Playwright Greg Thompson has captured a heart-felt look into the not so private

life of a Hollywood darling in his play with music, *Marilyn: Forever Blonde*, revealing the innermost thoughts of Marilyn Monroe. It is told in her own words and music, currently playing at the Stella Adler Theatre in the heart of Hollywood.

The story has become as old as time, at least in this town of movie magic, with a naïve dreamer wandering into the all too open arms of the Hollywood moguls, only to discover that sex always sells, and once in the grip of the studio system, there is rarely an easy escape route. Or so was the case during the so-called "Golden Age" of Hollywood.

Thompson's book culls from various interviews and newsreel clips of Monroe - having her reminisce at the ripe old age of 36, nearly time for producers to put her out to pasture - of her turbulent upbringing and rise to one of the silver screen's most recognizable faces. Monroe, as exquisitely portrayed by Thompson's wife Sunny, was a shooting star that shined brighter than any of the other Hollywood bombshells. Yet, inevitably, it was the same business that granted her success, which ultimately drove her to that now notorious finale.

Sunny Thompson exhibits an uncanny resemblance to Monroe, not only in her vivacious figure but also in her delicate voice. She amazingly captures the essence

of Monroe as beautifully as she fits into the handful of salacious dresses worn throughout the performance.

Portraying an extremely vulnerable woman, Thompson recounts Monroe's past, including the repeated failed romances with the likes of Joe DiMaggio and [Arthur Miller](#), with such touching sincerity, it is hard to discern where Monroe stops and Thompson begins.



Alluding to her ultimate demise, Thompson spends the evening downing a bottle of champagne, which constantly reminds that Hollywood doesn't always produce happy endings. Musical numbers such as "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" and "Some Like it Hot" are a pleasure to hear when sung by Thompson, always reminding of Monroe's iconic imprint left on the world. Accompanied by the elegant costumes (Mimi Countryman and Alice Worthy), flashy lighting (Woody Woodburn) and stark white sets (Jason Phillips), taking in a night of *Marilyn: Forever Blonde* is a treat, and far more enjoyable than turning on another episode of "True Hollywood Story."

Marilyn: Forever Blonde includes make-up designer [Jimmy James](#). Performances run through Sunday, April 1 at the Stella Adler Theatre at 6773 Hollywood Boulevard. Tickets are \$30 and can be purchased at www.tix.com or by calling 800-595-4849. For more information, visit www.marilynforeverblonde.com.

Photos by Howard Petrella

James Sims is a freelance writer for The Hollywood Reporter. Born and raised in Los Angeles, he has been a part of the entertainment industry one way or another his entire life. He spent a couple years hosting a morning radio show in South Korea before returning to Los Angeles to pursue a career as an entertainment journalist. James worked for various radio stations around California as well as worked a short while with Entertainment Tonight/The Insider. An avid musical theatre enthusiast, he is constantly traveling to New York to stay caught up with the latest happenings on Broadway. His next goal, to prove to the world that Los Angeles really does have some "high culture" left through shedding light on some of its prime theatre happenings. Although he is still trying to decide if David Zippel's lyrics from "City of Angels" hold any truth, "L.A., truth to tell, is not much different than a pretty girl with the clap."