



buddsbmw.com

thespec.com

<http://www.thespec.com/article/378922>[\[Close\]](#)

It's a Canadian music Explosion

The Band, The Crewcuts, Dion ... what a celebration of our talent

GARY SMITH

The Hamilton Spectator

(Jun 2, 2008)

Showtime

What: Canadian Explosion

Where: Stage West Dinner Theatre, 5400 Dixie Rd., Mississauga

When: Now through July 6

Tickets:  1-800-263-0684

Finally, equal time for Canada. After successful British Invasions and time in the sun with California Dreamin', the Maple Leaf has a music show all its own.

About time, too. Canada doesn't need to take a back seat to the U.S. or Britain when it comes to big, fat gold record hits.

Our songwriters and singers -- sometimes one and the same people -- have been going for gold since the 1960s.

That's something Canadian Explosion pays tribute to in two-and-a-half hours of song-by-song entertainment.

From early guy groups, like The Crewcuts and The Four Lads, to wholesome songbirds like Anne Murray and Gale Garnett, this fast-paced, high-energy production begins in the past and explodes into the present.

You only have to hear Michael Lomenda tear into Bobby Curtola's Fortune Teller to make you think you're back at a sock hop in high school. Curtola was everything Fabian and Frankie Avalon wished they were. And he could sing, too. Go figure.

Then there's Paul Anka, still going strong at close to 70. The Italian kid from Ottawa not only sang the big hits, he wrote them. I remember watching him on the Ed Sullivan Show back in the mists of time and thinking, "Wow, that kid's Canadian."

Watch cute little Trevor Covelli sing the socks off Diana and you'll be instantly transported back to Canadian Bandstand.

For most people over a certain age, it's the early Canadian stars here that have big impact.

We can all remember where we were the first time we heard Anne Murray sing Snowbird. No matter how much she protests, it's still a sweet song and a tribute to a time of innocence.

Not that Canadian Explosion dwells only in the distant past, you understand. There are medleys dedicated to the slightly more recent The Guess Who and The Band. And current Canadian stars are well represented with Josee Boudreau giving an effective nod to that Vegas Diva, Celine Dion bellowing Power Of Love and Because You Loved Me. She's not for me, but millions must love her.

Director-choreographer Tim French does for this mindless but loving explosion of Canadian music the same fabulous thing he did for Dreamgirls at Theatre Aquarius. French picks up the banalities of a so-so script, hoisting things over head, and runs with it.

The little scripted passages here aren't really necessary, but they do tend to keep things in context. Happily, they also zing along allowing an ingratiating cast to connect with their appreciative audience.

For once in a Stage West revue, the guys come off better than the gals. There isn't a duffer in the bunch. Each can belt out a song, dance passably well and look terrific in every exotic costume.

Best of the lot is Hamilton hotshot Adam Stevenson. This lad's come on strong since his last Stage West outing and he pretty much takes over here, dominating the stage each chance he gets.

Stevenson has a powerful voice that connects mightily with Gordon Lightfoot's sweet and moody If You Could Read My Mind then soars on Paul Anka's intense She's A Lady. Stevenson's hot and given the right buildup, he could be selling his own million-disc hits.

Paula McNeil sings a mean Anne Murray, making Snowbird a sweet anthem to survival and the resilience of the human spirit.

All they'd have to do at the end of the evening is play O Canada and we'd all be on our feet. Well deserved too.

Gary Smith has written on theatre and dance for The Hamilton Spectator for more than 25 years.