

You'll never want to say goodbye to Costa Mesa's "Bye Bye Birdie!"  
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Inspired by the drafting of Elvis Presley in 1958, Costa Mesa's "Bye Bye Birdie" follows the imminent departure of superstar Conrad Birdie (Colin Sanchez) for the warfront, leaving his managerial team to conduct his farewell performance. But when jealous boyfriends, an overprotective father, and obsessive fans interrupt the show; the team learns the value of love, friends and, of course, rock and roll.

With his Mississippi drawl and crooked smirk, Colin Sanchez captures Conrad Birdie's charisma. Arms wildly outstretched and eyes fixated on the audience ahead, he serenades Isabella Mills (Kim MacAfee) in "Honestly Sincere" with the rich vocal tone and booming vibrato of a true performer. Providing comedic relief, Mills in turn faints and gazes dreamily at him with the wide and expectant eyes of a naïve girl. Yet she abandons her childish hair twirling in "What Did I Ever See in Him," trading her head-over-heels gawking and soft falsetto for the defiant intonation and rigid posture of a levelheaded young woman.

The Conrad Birdie Fan Club elicits laughs through high pitched squeals and exaggerated movement as Margie (Karla Gurrola) in particular clings to the star's pant leg, screaming hysterically during "One Last Kiss." Further still, Ursula Merkle (Rosey Bagnara) shouts the verses to "We Love you Conrad!" with an ear-to-ear grin, signifying her unwavering devotion even while, legs wobbling, she faints for comedic effect.

The imagination of sound and lighting designer (Rachel Lawrence) transports audiences to the 1960s as "Telephone Hour" opens with the familiar ringing of a vintage telephone. Combined with the projection of rainbow colors onto the backdrop, Lawrence emulates the vibrancy and playfulness of teenage life.

The lighting design also parallels each character's emotions as the background shifts from a muted blue to florescent pink when Kim and Rose Alvarez (Clarice Encarnacion) each fall in love. Mirroring the cheerfulness and passion they currently feel, this design illuminates the stage with warm tones and even warmer feelings.

Working in tandem with sound, the pit orchestra's emotional swell of dynamics propels Conrad Birdie's performances as a crescendo of saxophones, trumpets, and others combine with Joseph Hufford's (guitarist) blaring base line to immerse audiences in the rock and roll music of the 1960s.

Vibrant and timeless, Costa Mesa's dedicated cast and crew deliver a welcome blast from the past with "Bye Bye Bye."