"YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN"

The Musical Theatre Guild's production of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* this past weekend was a taste of the best that could be expected from a generally weak play. It is unfortunate that the MTG selected this particular show for their January performance, for much of their hard work was lost in the debilities of the script they handed themselves.

You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown is an anthology of several of the best scenes that Charles Schulz created for his Peanuts comic series. The play focuses on six of the Peanuts cast: Lucy, Linus, Schroeder, Patty, Snoopy, and of course, Charlie Brown. The action is built around several sustained sketches dealing with subjects such as Charlie Brown's infatuation with the little red haired girl or the classic lost baseball game. A selection of very short gaps is sprinkled liberally between these longer scenes. The weakness of the script is fundamental. First, the play is far too episodic; the only links between the acts are the characters themselves. Secondly, if the jokes work and amuse the audience, the play moves on; if they fail, the resulting awkwardness destroys the mood of the play. Such a play is difficult to execute successfully even under the best of circumstances.

Laboring against these problems, the MTG managed to do a remarkably good job. The characters were well played and the staging was excellent. Perhaps the best — as well as the easiest — portrayal was that of Lucy, admirably done by Linda Schaffir. Her creation was the classic frustrate girl. The characters were well played and the audience, the play moves on; if they fail, the resulting awkwardness destroys the mood of the play. Such a play is difficult to execute successfully even under the best of circumstances.

Human Sexual Response with Someone and the Somebodies at the Paradise, Friday, January 30

What a deal. Press passes to see Human Sexual Response, with the added bonus of Someone and the Somebodies (... who?), A bill like that could even make a place like the Paradise endurable... well, almost. Once nailed into my seat by a friendly usher (pronounced "bouncer"), I settled in for the inevitable delay. The tendencies behind me were heard to say, "Stop joking, will you? What's the opening band really called?" I never heard the answer, because the Somebodies finally made it to the stage. Someone and the Somebodies play a peculiar brand of what has been called "voodoo dance-trance music" — tight, precise, dark tunes. As they worked their way through a set consisting of their Bumps on the Head EP and other tunes, the similarities between the Somebodies and Joy Division became increasingly apparent.

The set peaked with "People Are Dumb" — a tour de force for bassist/vocalist Tristram Lazor. The energy contained through "Working in a Coal Mine," a tune that features an amazing vocal trade-off between Tristram and lead guitarist Robbie Davis. Robbie's guitar playing is one of the best features of the Somebodies music; he runs his guitar through a synthesizer to get some incredibly strange sounds. Drummer Jonathan Coo and guitarist Michael Glickman also contribute to the band's jagged rhythms.

The set concluded with "She Lost Control" by Ian Curtis of Joy Division. This was intended, perhaps, to be an acknowledgement of their influences. The Somebodies performed admirably, providing an interesting set of very danceable music, but they could use a bit more stage presence.

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