

'Rocky Horror' sets up its camp on Broadway

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW: A Broadway musical revival.

Book, music, and lyrics by Richard O'Brien. Directed by Christopher Ashley

ROBERT FELDBERG

Seldom has a review seemed more beside the point than with "The Rocky Horror Show." The revival, which opened Wednesday night at the Circle in the Square, attempts to re-create the atmosphere of the midnight cult performances of the 1975 film version, "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." And its target ticket-buyers -- who certainly know the territory -- are the camp followers who've been the film's audiences, dressing as their favorite characters and chanting dialogue or making rude responses to the screen.

The show's narrator, Dick Cavett (yes, Dick Cavett), under siege from hecklers at a recent performance, called them "idiot savants," and you felt that -- all in fun, of course -- the former TV host would have left out the second word in the phrase if he were less obsessed with his erudition.

Having said that, I suspect that "Rocky Horror" fans will have a glorious time, maybe even better than at the film, because some of these characters talk back. As



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for everyone else, they should take my praise conditionally, bearing in mind that the gender-bender show is, as its creator Richard O'Brien said, a "joyous concoction of adolescent trash."

If you're up for that, the musical provides great entertainment, with director Christopher Ashley, choreographer Jerry Mitchell, and a very strong cast finding

exactly the right mix of rock-and-roll energy and winking silliness. And everything rides the coattails of O'Brien's exuberant score -- played by an excellent five-piece band -- which is a reminder that rock music can be a lot of fun.

The success of the picture is honored and milked by opening the show as if it

were the film, with several cast members and life-size dummies sitting in movie seats and watching the opening on a screen. (The scenery, by David Rockwell, best known for designing the interiors of theaters, hotels, and restaurants, does all kinds of eye-popping tricks.)

Then it's off to the story, with a lot of scantily-clad actors and actresses, some dressed as members of the opposite sex, creating a fractured version of "Frankenstein," although to call "The Rocky Horror Show" a spoof would give it a focus and purpose it hardly aspires to.

For the uninitiated, Janet and Brad, a pair of virginal innocents (played by the talented young musical-theater performers Alice Ripley and Jarrod Emick), wander into the mansion of Frank 'N' Furter (the haughtily outrageous Tom Hewitt), a mad, cross-dressing scientist from another planet who has created a man (Sebastian LaCause) for his sexual pleasure, and who has similar designs on Janet and Brad.

Also on hand are a couple of attendants, played by the sexy and full-throated Daphne Rubin-Vega, a star of the original cast of "Rent," and egg-bald rocker Joan Jett, whose forte is attitude rather than acting. Comic Lea DeLaria plays a couple of guys and Raul Esparza is appropriately sinister as the assistant Riff Raff (portrayed by O'Brien in the original stage version and in the film).

The presence of the sport-jacketed, eternally preppie Cavett in this decadent, glittery crew, in which men wear bustiers or briefs and women romp in their underwear, or less, is a wonderful visual joke. His other contributions to the show are mixed.

He's been given the freedom to ad lib, which meant a number of election jokes the other night, mostly unfunny; he was much more amusing in responding to the hecklers. Cavett also opens the second act with a monologue that slows the show and could easily be dispensed with.

The original, 1973 production of "The Rocky Horror Show" was a hit in London but flopped on Broadway in 1975, running only 32 performances. This production should do much better, even drawing beyond the 800 cultists whom Cavett joked would come back night after night after night.

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BRIDGE: Safety first

JULIAN LADERMAN

A safety play occurs when a declarer chooses to play a suit in a fashion that will protect him from a bad break in that suit. Usually this implies that the declarer is willing to sacrifice overtricks in order to increase the likelihood that the contract is successful. In some bridge books, the definition of a safety play requires that potential overtricks be risked. They feel that if this does not occur it is just a case where proper technique is being applied to the suit and should not be called a safety play. Many authors use the more general definition.

Recent bridge books devote less space to safety plays than older ones since the most common form of tournament bridge is matchpoint duplicate pairs, where the scoring method places a great value on overtricks. Often a declarer will be willing to risk a contract in order to increase his chance of overtricks. This may be a reasonable and proper decision for this method of scoring but it clearly diminishes the appeal of many safety plays.

On the illustrated hand, declarer must win four diamond tricks in order to make the 6NT contract. Simply playing the ace and the king on the first two diamond tricks will be successful whenever the diamond suit breaks 3-2. There is a 68% chance this will occur. Declarer will also be successful when the suit breaks 4-1 and the singleton is the jack or queen. There is an 11% chance this will occur. Therefore declarer will be successful almost 80% of the time with this line of play. But, before he gets elated with his likely success, he should consider whether he can protect himself from other 4-1 breaks and even 5-0 breaks.

Declarer should try to figure out which defender is most likely to have 4 or 5 diamonds. By playing two rounds of clubs, he

NORTH		EAST	
♠ K 6	♠ Q 10 7 4	♠ A 5	♠ 9 8 4 3
A 10 9 8 6	♠ 3	♣ A J 10 7	♣ 8 4 3 2
♣ A J 10 7	♣ 6	♣ A 5 3	♣ K 6 2
♣ 6	♣ K Q 9 5	♣ K 7 5	♣ K Q 9 5

DEALER: EAST
NORTH-SOUTH VULNERABLE

West	North	East	South
---	---	Pass	1NT*
Pass	6NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			
* 15-17 HCP			
Opening lead: heart queen			

will learn that West started with only one club. Since West is very unlikely to have two singletons, West is more likely than East to have 4 or 5 diamonds.

Based on this information, declarer can win the king of diamonds on the first round of diamonds. On the second round of diamonds, he can play a small diamond out of his hand. If West does not play an honor, declarer should play a small diamond from dummy. If East has either diamond honor this trick will be lost, but then, the ace will win the third trick and drop the other diamond honor. On the illustrated hand, declarer will win the second trick and the diamond ace will win the third one while capturing a diamond honor. After the defense wins the fourth round of diamonds,

the remaining diamond in dummy will be declarer's twelfth trick. If East had shown out in diamonds on the first round, declarer could finesse West's diamond honors twice and still win four diamond tricks even with West holding 5 diamonds.

Even though by playing the king of diamonds declarer will be successful whenever West has long diamonds, there is a slightly superior line of play that protects against some holdings when the assumption that West started with long diamonds is incorrect. Since this line of play has only a very slight advantage and it is not as intuitive as the play in the last paragraph, you may wish to skip the rest of this paragraph. On the first round of diamonds declarer can play a small diamond from dummy toward the king. If East shows out or plays an honor, declarer should win the trick with the king. If, however, East play a low diamond, declarer should play a low diamond from his hand instead of the king. The king of diamonds should then be used to win the second diamond trick.

Playing the two rounds of clubs is called a discovery play since its purpose was to obtain information that would help declarer decide how to play the diamond suit. If when declarer played the two rounds of clubs, he had learned that East rather than West had started with only one club, he should assume East had long diamonds. If clubs had broken 3-2, it would have been harder to judge which defender was most likely to have long diamonds.

Even though bridge experts may disagree on whether this is an example of a safety play, they will agree that it is essential to anticipate and prepare for bad breaks. One advantage of bridge over athletic sports is that your bad breaks will be in your suits and not in your bones.

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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE FROM PAGE A-11

D	E	N	P	L	A	N	A	K	I	N	
A	D	A	L	O	G	E	R	A	L	E	
B	A	R	B	A	D	O	S	A	R	I	A
R	A	C	E	T	A	B	L	E	T		
P	E	A	C	E	C	L	A	Y			
L	A	T	H	L	A	I	R	W	A	R	
E	T	O	B	E	R	N	E	A	R	E	
D	A	R	L	O	N	G	G	R	A	B	
P	A	N	E	A	O	R	T	A			
G	E	I	S	H	A	A	B	B	A		
A	N	O	A	M	A	C	H	I	N	E	S
B	I	L	L	E	C	H	O	T	A	I	
E	D	A	M	S	E	E	R	S	R	S	