



NOTHING LIKE A DAME & FEINSTEIN: Dame Edna and Michael Feinstein in *All About Me* at Henry Miller's Theatre. Photo: Joan Marcus

There is nothing like this Dame & Feinstein in the funny but flawed musical *All About Me*

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Or, perhaps, more aptly put, *All About My Ego?* Dame Edna Everage and Michael Feinstein—although both quite talented—are not exactly what one might call dream casting on Broadway. They are both unique in their styles and techniques, but sometimes lack chemistry together. Instead of complementing each other, they seem to be in competition, but maybe that is the satirical point of this highly entertaining show.

Feinstein has a big, brash, beguiling voice, singing the American Songbook, with songs from Gershwin, Irving Berlin and Rodgers and Hart, but these show-tune standards are more appropriate for his renowned cabaret act. Feinstein's charm and charisma does not necessarily translate to a big stage. His songs, however, are beautifully arranged and backed by a full orchestra. Feinstein's standouts include Gershwin's "Strike Up The Band."

Dame Edna (the drag alter ego of Australian comedian Barry Humphries), on the other hand, is big, brash, and ballsy. Her material was fresh and innovative on Broadway years ago, but is a bit stale now, yet she manages to get many well-deserved laughs. Anyone who saw Dame Edna's previous Broadway ventures like the Tony-winning *Dame Edna: The Royal Tour* or is familiar with her numerous British talk shows knows her brand of dry humor and shtick well, but her act has not changed much over the years. Her most triumphant, razzle-dazzle showstopper here is Sondheim's "The Ladies Who Lunch" from *Company*. And there is nothing like seeing and hearing this Dame, singing intentionally off-key, during a madcap send-up of Beyoncé's "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" while two muscle-bound chorus guys dance around her with campy zeal.

Each performer is entertaining in his (and her) own style, but work best separately. Unfortunately, their patter and medleys come across, at times, as slightly uncomfortable and stilted. Witnessing Feinstein and Dame Edna sing medleys and trade wisecracks is like watching a mismatched duo on the Oscars or the Tonys. Both are celebrities in their own right, but they somehow cancel each other out while performing together.

Regardless, there is plenty of Dame Edna's trademark quick-witted banter,

the ever-present Australian gladiolas, and a cornucopia of corny jokes, making *All About Me* an amusing 90-minute diversion if nothing else, Possums.

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