

**'Guys on Ice' an enjoyable fish story**  
**By Katie Hanson - The Daily Iowan, 1/27/09**

Near the end of *Guys on Ice*, one of the characters, Marvin, declares, "Heaven must be cold - like Wisconsin."

For pals Marvin and Lloyd, Sturgeon Bay might as well be heaven. The area supplies all of their few wants: cold Leinies, good women, Packer tickets, and a wishing hole (for the uninitiated: fishing hole).

For audience members, the musical-comedy *Guys on Ice* provides 90 mellow but entertaining minutes of ridiculous songs, Midwestern ribbing, and events that resonate even with those who have never had the pleasure of eating deep-fried cheese curds.

During the course of a day in their ice-fishing shanty, Marvin and Lloyd attempt to catch a bucket of perch but end up cracking ice-fishing jokes, avoiding their acquaintance Ernie the Moocher, and even raising great philosophical questions, such as "Do fish feel pain?" and "Do ya think der's ice fishing in heaven?" All of their lines are uttered in Fargo character Marge Gunderson's accent, but instead of saying "I guess that was your accomplice in the woodchipper," they're more apt to ask, "So how 'bout dem Packers?"

Of all the play's elements, the musical numbers make the largest impression. The songs draw inspiration from Marvin's crush on tattooed check-out girl Bonnie, snowmobile suits, Elvis, and, of course, fish. Marvin and Lloyd croon as they prance about the stage, kicking up their snow boots and waving scarves in the most creative choreography seen since Brett Favre was still a Packer.

What may be most striking, however, lingers just under the surface like a trout about to bite. Actors Ron Clark (Marvin) and John Watkins (Lloyd) convey a surprising amount of sentimentality through their roles, waxing about marriage and Wisconsin winters and displaying affection that seems unexpected coming from guys who can form whole conversations with the word "ya."

The musical may not appeal to everyone; northern Wisconsin sensibilities are not universal, nor are beer jokes and songs comparing women to fish. Yet the sweet messages about friendship are tough to deny, much like the truth in the statement: "Work is for guys that don't know how to fish."

Ernie the Moocher, the bane of Marv and Lloyd's existence, makes a bigger splash during the intermission, or rather, the "halftime show" - an arguably integral part of the production. Flanked by fabulous prizes, he (or she - mustachioed actress Kris Hartsgrove injects an impressive amount of testosterone into the role) quizzes the audience on Wisconsin trivia, and the crowd is happy to shout out answers with equal enthusiasm for a stocking cap or even a sixer of Leinenkugel's beer.

The perch may not bite and the day may not end like they planned, but both Marv and Lloyd would agree it turns out much better. I'd bet a pair of Packers-Bears tickets most audience members would agree.

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