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By their very nature, biographical jukebox musicals such as *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* - currently being performed at the Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse - have to be a little glib. Given roughly two hours of stage time, how can book writers adequately detail a performer's personal and professional arcs *without* drastically simplifying the experience?

Alan Janes and Rob Bettison, the authors of this pastiche of '50s hits, haven't exactly licked this problem; you leave the theatre with no greater understanding of the artist's fervor and drive than you had when you entered it. But the show's writers have also done something shrewd with *Buddy*: Instead of ignoring the format's built-in limitations, they've *embraced* them, turning the tale of Buddy Holly's brief rock-and-roll career into an amiable, lightweight musical sitcom.

The authors' approach - and, consequently, director Ann Nieman's - is evident five minutes into the production, when Holly (Todd Meredith) and the Crickets (Justin Droegemueller and Tristan Layne Tapscott) perform a live, drawling version of "Flower of My Heart" for a local country station, while the program's disc jockey listens in an adjoining studio. (Tom Walljasper plays the DJ Hipockets Duncan, oddly called Hot Pockets throughout the show.) At the song's end, the band immediately breaks into the up-tempo rock of "Ready Teddy," much to Duncan's - and his listeners' - shock, and seconds later, the DJ is fielding complaints from two callers simultaneously.