

# New Song and Dance

By MIKE ROSS

This thing has been done to death in Edmonton - why bring Boy Groove back to the Fringe yet again? Isn't this event about taking chances, doing something different? Well, here's why:

A. Because it's a great show. Because people like Justin Timberlake, Britney Spears and the Backstreet Boys insist on continuing to exist. We need to make fun of them as much as possible lest their insipid brand of teeny-pop fluff take over the world again, if it hasn't already.

For those who haven't seen Chris Craddock's crackling little musical, it's basically a roller

coaster parody of boy bands whose music and choreography is as good, if not better, than the real thing. "Good," of course, is a relative term when referring to a term when discussing boy bands.

One of the big numbers is called "You Make My Hips Jump" or something along those lines, and let's face it, isn't that really the central message of every single "N Sync song? To give you an idea of the general tone here, one of the members gives a prayer: "Dear Jesus, I wish I had a bigger penis ... I want a penis that matches my stature in the world of pop music." Parental advisory: This show is not aimed at the same target market as the Backstreet Boys.

Boy Groove is not just song and dance. The tale takes you through the band process: the auditions, the rehearsals, the

screaming girls, the lawsuit against the Svengali manager, the feud with the gangsta rapper, the inevitable scandal, the comeback, the even more inevitable breakup, the solo careers. One of the members is gay for a theme that is perhaps hit too hard - the crutch of homosexuality in so many Fringe plays creates instant dramatic tension - but it results in hilarious moments. Eminem is also given a big poke.

Boy Groove is not just fun and frivolity. Serious questions are posed about the nature of art, popular entertainment and celebrity. One of the boys points out, "Not all music needs to be an embarrassing revelation of your personal life ... some art is shallow." How true.

Matt Alden, Andrew Bursey, Jon Paterson and Scott Walters are terrific playing a wide range of vivid character stereotypes, flashing from one to another with lightning speed. The musical backup, effects and sight gags are spot on. It's a laugh a minute, a laugh per second, even. The whole thing runs like a well-oiled machine - which it is. Boy Groove has been performed about a million times. Which brings us to another reason to remount it again: C. Money. To consider Craddock and his cohorts as greedy bastards for milking Boy Groove for every dime it can generate simply adds another layer to the parody. The Backstreet Boys just released a new album, too.

