

**The new kid on the block**



**Cincinnati has plenty to offer for entertainment**

Fate delivered me to the Queen City with a bang in August 1999. The front tires on my Oldsmobile exploded on I-75 and shattered the front end of my car and it quickly became apparent I was going nowhere fast.

Miraculously, I received a telephone call on that very day which offered me a job at a company in Springdale, and suddenly I moved to Cincinnati, a city I knew little about.

After living in cities like Dallas, Los Angeles and New York, I had grown accustomed to plowing through life as though I was wearing a hazmat suit, striving to avoid boredom like the plague. So I quickly realized I needed to explore my new host city with unbridled curiosity as if I were to feel at home.

Initially, I was reliant on friends to show me around. With the arrival of Labor Day, they took me down to the riverfront for the Toyota/WEBN fireworks. Pressed into the throng of people down by Serpentine Wall at Sawyer Point, I could not help but wonder if the experience was worth it.

But then I saw the now infamous Naked Cowboy and was impressed anyone would be so self confident that he would feel comfortable playing his guitar in nothing more than cowboy boots and a pair of tighty-whities.

Later, after eating Skyline chili, which more closely resembled goulash than the Texas chili I had grown up on, I realized everyone had stopped to stare heavenward. Suddenly, fireworks exploded overhead and the Roebling Suspension Bridge glimmered with sparklers as rock music filled the air. This must be a pretty hip town, I thought.

In the following months, I began dating and soon my girlfriend enthusiastically introduced me to theatre in Cincinnati by taking me to the Playhouse in the Park. Skeptic that I am, I braced myself to be sorely disappointed, wondering how a local little theatre company could possibly do justice to the 1998 Tony Award-winning play, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, for which we had tickets.

When we arrived at the small hilltop theatre and stepped into the foyer, my trepidation began to dissipate. The spacious theatre is lovely with its marble and chrome design. The interior has an impressive design that makes effective use of space, creating an intimacy between performer and audience with a stage that protrudes into the seating area.

The performance was so riveting I could not take my eyes off of it. So enthralled was I with the professional quality of the set designs, the lighting and the actors themselves, I literally forgot I was in a small playhouse rather than at a Broadway show.

Since then, the level of quality has kept me going back for more, to watch shows like the musical *Gypsy* and the supernatural thriller *Dracula*, which is currently playing until October 5th. The classic blood-sucking masterpiece has been brought to vivid life with a creepy castle, dazzling special effects and a superb cast.

"Students can get \$18 tickets two hours before any show with a student ID," said Sandy Gray of the playhouse box office staff. She suggested that students call ahead of time to purchase tickets over the phone using a credit card to save a few steps. For ticket information, call 513-421-3888 or visit the playhouse online at [www.cincyplay.com](http://www.cincyplay.com).

Regardless of how long you have been in Cincinnati, I hope in coming weeks this column inspires you to live well and succeeds in introducing you to new and different things to do when you are out on the town.

Have any ideas of places to go in Cincy? E-mail Jathan at [finkjh@email.uc.edu](mailto:finkjh@email.uc.edu).