



'PRETTY FACES': Cast portrays contestants in a beauty pageant for large-size women.

Facing competition in a big way

By JERRY TALLMER

IT'S an oddball premise, a show about a "Global Glamour Girl" beauty pageant in the Mid-America of Paris, Ohio, for young ladies of, shall we say, girth. Billed as "The large and lovely musical," this handiwork of author/composer Robert W. Cabell is at the small and distinctly modest Actors' Outlet Theater, one flight up in the fur and novelty-jewelry district at 120 W. 28th St.

I went expecting the worst, but I had forgotten that the song "Oh, You Great Big Beautiful Doll" expressed some powerful romanticism well before my own time. "Pretty Faces" is better than it seems, thanks to a half-dozen pretty faces indeed, lots of spirit, and even a kind of tenderness behind and beyond a tide of such pre-cooked laugh lines as: "I like a man

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whose chest is bigger than mine."

You might think of "Pretty Faces" as a Size XXL "Chorus Line," since we learn a good bit about each of the six contestants — one blonde, one Hispanic, one black, etc., like a WWII movie squad — and their backgrounds, dreams, private agonies. This is where the tenderness (mixed with humor) comes in: When Patricia (Heather Ann Stokes) makes every man in the audience feel guilty with her song "Too Plump for Prom Night"; when the angst-ridden Pleasure (Amy Ryder), whose father has given her the cold-shoulder all her life, decides to gut it out and go through with the competition she knows she'll lose. Corny, but...

The one prettiest face, both in script and in flesh — director/cho-

reographer Gene Foote must have seen to that — is Kathleen Rosamond Kelly as Bobby-Joy Buckley from Wildcat Ridge, Texas. She's the ingenue who'll have a boy-meets-loses-gets-girl happy ending with Carter, the young stage manager, a bashful self-described "geek" beautifully portrayed by Michael Winther. But before that, Bobby-Joy will stop the show as a red-clad cheerleader, baton in hand, singing, stomping: "I'm Twirlin' for Jesus."

The only funnier thing is Paul-ette, the goody-goody opera student (Margaret Dyer), singing into the telephone to a pervert: "Don't Talk Dirty 'Cause You're Turning Me On." Worth the entire price of admission is the unearthly scream emitted by I-won't-tell-you-who when all others are eliminated as runners-up and she realizes she's finally won the crown.