

# 'Manic Pixie Dream Girl' has PUNCH

By Jean Schiffman  
Special to The S.F. Examiner

You may think you don't know what a "manic pixie dream girl" is — that's the title of Katie May's new play, a PlayGround-commissioned world premiere at the tiny Costume Shop — but you do. Think Annie Hall. Think Audrey Hepburn in "Breakfast at Tiffany's." Think Zoey Deschanel. Apparently the term was coined by a film critic.

As explained during the course of this short, crisp and devilishly entertaining comedy, it refers to the generically adorable, free-spirited girl-woman who shows up in movies to rescue the brooding, troubled male and teach him about the joys of life. In May's inventive approach, and under Jon Tracy's reliably punchy direction, the familiar story is told in a quasi-graphic-novel style, acted out realistically yet with pow-kazam comic book flourishes.

Thanks to this excellent cast, Tracy's panache and Rob Dario's projected illustrations on a vertical screen on the small stage, May's concept works.

Our narrator, struggling graphic artist Tallman (a wide-eyed, likable Joshua Roberts in hoodie and sneakers), is indeed in trouble. His girlfriend and muse (a tough-as-nails Liz Anderson) recently dumped him, so now he has artist's block.

He's about to be evicted from his apartment for being in arrears with the rent; the evil new landlord is his ex's new boyfriend (Lucas Hatton, hilarious in several roles). Tallman's caustic best friend, Porter (Michael Barrett Austin), does little but berate him for his loser lifestyle ("You're John Cusack in 'High Fidelity!'").

So when he meets a beautiful,

## REVIEW

### Manic Pixie Dream Girl

Presented by PlayGround and Manic Pixie Productions

**Where:** Costume Shop, 1117 Market St., S.F.

**When:** 8 p.m. Thursdays-Sundays; extended through Feb. 17

**Tickets:** \$25 to \$35

**Contact:** (415) 799-8350, [www.manicpixiedreamgirl.org](http://www.manicpixiedreamgirl.org)

playful young woman (equally wide-eyed, vulnerable Lyndsy Kail) in his neighborhood pub, he sees her as a lifeline.

No matter that she doesn't speak, or that she obsessively hordes Starburst candy wrappers, or that she's very oddly dressed (costumes by Antonia Gunnarson).

No matter that her entire existence is a mystery. She smells like fresh laundry, she's his new muse, and he's back at work and feeling good.

"Liking the way she makes you feel is not like liking an actual person!" says a disgusted Porter.

May's sketchy scenario leads to a bittersweet ending that solves Tallman's immediate problems without digging deep into the psychology that led him into this weird romance in the first place. On that level, it's a bit frustrating.

But "Manic Pixie" is a charmer that succeeds on its own terms, and it augurs well for future offerings by the talented playwright.

#### SHE'S THE MUSE

Lyndsy Kail appears as the title character in Katie May's world premiere "Manic Pixie Dream Girl."



COURTESY PHOTO

## EVENTS

### Today

#### Dengue Fever

The psychedelic-rock and Cambodian-pop band formed after musicians Ethan and Zac Holtzman discovered Khmer-fluent Chhom Nimol singing in a Southern California club. The group released its debut LP in 2003; "Cannibal Courtship" is its newest recording.

**WHEN:** 8 p.m.

**WHERE:** Independent, 628 Divisadero St., S.F.

**PRICE:** Tickets are \$16 to \$18

**INFO:** Call (415) 771-1421 or visit [www.theindependentsf.com](http://www.theindependentsf.com)

### Friday

#### Destroyer

The Kiss tribute band, a San Francisco group together for 16 years, has opened for the real Kiss and been featured in magazines including Rolling Stone and Spin.

**WHEN:** 9 p.m.

**WHERE:** Great American Music Hall, 859 O'Farrell St., S.F.

**PRICE:** Tickets are \$12

**INFO:** Call (415) 885-0750 or visit [www.slimspresents.com](http://www.slimspresents.com)

### Saturday



#### Essence CD release party

The performer appears in concert to celebrate her new recording for kids, "A Dog Named Moo and His Friend Roo."

**WHEN:** 11 a.m.

**WHERE:** Children's Creativity Museum, 221 Fourth St., S.F.

**PRICE:** Museum admission is \$11

**INFO:** Call (415) 820-3320 or visit <http://creativity.org>

#### Two Gallants

The folk-rock duo consists of Adam Stephens and Tyson Vogel, longtime San Francisco friends who released their debut album in 2004. Three more albums, plus international tours, followed. Their latest release is "The Bloom and the Blight."

**WHEN:** 9 p.m.

**WHERE:** Fillmore, 1805 Geary Blvd., S.F.

**PRICE:** Tickets are \$22.50

**INFO:** Visit [www.apeconcerts.com](http://www.apeconcerts.com)



FEBRUARY 1 & 2\*

SMOOTH JAZZ/NEW AGE KEYBOARDIST AND COMPOSER

**KEIKO MATSUI**

\*The February 1 & 2, 2013 performances of Keiko Matsui at Live At The RRazz will take place at The Commandants Ballroom at The Marines' Memorial Club And Hotel, 609 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.



FEBRUARY 7-9

AN INTIMATE EVENING WITH

**CUBA GOODING**

**& THE MAIN INGREDIENT**

EVERYBODY PLAYS THE FOOL "SOUL TRAIN NIGHTS LIVE AT THE RRAZZ"



FEBRUARY 10

UPRIGHT GOES DISCO

THE MUSIC OF DONNA SUMMER, THE BEE GEES AND ABBA FEATURING DESMOND MEEKS (AMERICA'S GOT TALENT), JAKE SIMPSON (STAR SEARCH) AND HOST JIMMY JAMES



FEBRUARY 12-17

SPEND A ROMANTIC EVENING WITH

**JACK JONES**



FEBRUARY 19-24

AN INTIMATE EVENING WITH

**JONATHAN BUTLER**

NEW CD! "GRACE AND MERCY"

**LIVE AT THE RRAZZ**

SAN FRANCISCO'S PREMIER NIGHTCLUB

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT • BAR • RESTAURANT

THE LEGACY OF THE RRAZZ ROOM LIVES ON AT A GREAT NEW LOCATION!

1000 VAN NESS AVENUE (THE HISTORIC CADILLAC BUILDING), SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94109

**800-380-3095**

[www.LiveAtTheRRazz.com](http://www.LiveAtTheRRazz.com)

Grand Piano courtesy of Baldwin