Beat: Entertainment

Andre Hazes

The Dutch believe in him

Amsterdam, 18.11.2012, 13:18 Time

USPA NEWS - A new musical based on the life of Amsterdam folk singer André Hazes has received rave reviews across the Dutch media and reawakened interest in one of the country´s most popular singers who died in 2004.

André Hazes was not the first to sing what the Dutch call levensliederen (songs about real life), but he was the first to bring this genre into the modern era.

At the behest of his first producer, Tim Griek, the accordeons were dropped in favour of a rock band backing. Prior to Hazes, the sound of that other great Amsterdam singer Johnny Jordaan was pure folk. Hazes was rock 'n' roll. The musical links the two in the shape of its co-writer, the actor Kees Prins, who played the role of Johnny Jordaan in a tv series.

The levenslied genre has long been sneered at by the middle-classes for its sentimental and trite lyrics, but both the series and now the musical seem to point to a more universal acceptance of its artistic merits and that of its interpreters. Not that the fans ever needed such assurance: both Jordaan and Hazes have a loyal fan base who don´t care a hoot whether they are accepted by the middle-classes or not.

André Hazes was born in the working-class neighbourhood of the Pijp in Amsterdam. His statue stands not two minutes from his birthplace in Gerard Dou street. By all accounts his childhood was not a happy one: his father drank, was violent towards his children and, according to his third and last wife Rachel, Hazes was sexually abused as a child.

His first encounter with fame came when he was a child. Actor Johnny Kraaijkamp heard the eight-year-old sing on the Albert Cuyp street market to earn some money to buy a birthday present for his mother, a levenslied subject if ever there was one. He recorded a single but then not much happened.

The musical chronicles the last twenty years of their lives together as seen from Rachel´s point of view. Those who have seen John Appel´s documentary Zij gelooft in mij, (She Believes In Me, the title of one of Hazes´ biggest hits) know Hazes was a man crippled by insecurity, a prodigious drinker of beer, a negligent father to the children from his earlier marriages and a less than attentive husband.

He Believes in Me is now seen exclusively in the DeLaMar Theatre in Amsterdam, on November 11, the premiere took place.

The DeLaMar Theater is the newest theater in the heart of Amsterdam on 28 November 2010. The DeLaMar Theatre offers a wide public a varied program of theater, cabaret, musicals, family theater and several international performances.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-246/andre-hazes.html

Editorial office and responsibility:
V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Leon Koop

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619