

## Issue

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## PIECE OF MY HEART

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### THE UNTOLD STORY OF ROCK'N ROLL HITMAKER BERT BERNS UPBEAT, ENTERTAINING JUKEBOX MUSICAL COMES TO OFF-BROADWAY

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The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, Otis Redding, not to mention Neil Diamond and Van Morrison and of course, Janis Joplin... for sure it's not an instant comeback to say they're all connected to Bert Berns. An American original, Bert Berns was a songwriter and producer, a hitmaker of the 1960s, but he has remained comparatively unknown until now that the story of his life and music, Piece of My Heart, is bringing down the house Off-Broadway at The Pershing Square Signature Center. Don't wait to get your tickets, the show ends its run in mid-September so don't hesitate, immediately visit [www.pieceofmyheartmusical.com](http://www.pieceofmyheartmusical.com)

A heartfelt off-Broadway "jukebox musical" this bright and bubbly show reveals the man behind the music, a legend dubbed by Rolling Stone "one of the great untold stories of rock and roll." Bronx-born Bert Berns died young at age 38 in 1967 (rheumatic fever as a child was in effect a death sentence before open heart surgery.) But his legacy of chart topping singles keeps on playing, anguished anthems (Janis Joplin immortalized "Piece of My Heart") or catchy tunes with sexy hooks ("I Want Candy") each one memorable and somehow just a little bit different, with that out of the ordinary edge that has made Bert Berns' hits like "Twist and Shout," "Cry Baby," "Hang On Sloopy," and "Tell Him" last longer than a pop music

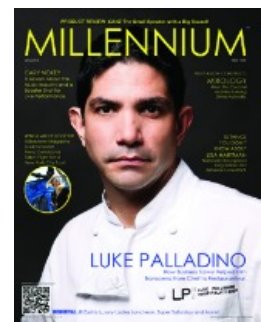
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moment – and these are just a few of the favorites among his 51 chart-topping singles, tunes that play on in our heads if not on rotation on VH-1, cropping up like the memory of a first kiss, taking us back to the golden era of rhythm and blues.

Seen through the eyes of his daughter (played by Leslie Kritzer) who poignantly revisits her father's life as she comes to terms with her own, the milestones flow together in a sometimes funny, sometimes sad and always entertaining rendition of familiar and enjoyable hits rendered with substantial leading man allure by Zak Resnick as Bert with a supporting cast that excels as well. Intimately staged the musical numbers are like candy, addictive and energizing, a pleasure to devour.

The characters are true to life and never strike a wrong note: there's blonde and beautiful Teal Wicks who plays Bert's wife Ilene as a girl, a go go dancer with ambition; his best buddy, Hoagy played by Derrick Baskin who finds himself blindsided by his trusted friend; the sexy seniorita who introduces Bert to the pleasures of Latin rhythm; and the money-hungry mama that Ilene becomes is cagey and tough as played by Linda Hart. But candy is more than just sweet stuff, Candace aka the inspiration for I Want Candy is played with bold sensuality by Tony Award nominated De'Adre Aziza (apparently the inspiration for "I Want Candy"); she simply sizzles. And comic relief comes in the form of a mobster Wazzel played by Joseph Siravo. Brute though he may be, it turns out Wazzel really is a good hearted fella.

Each character in Bert Berns' life as we experience it is clear and strong like the hooks in his hits, sticking with you well after the curtain goes down and the audience has jumped to their feet to passionately sing the last chorus of "Piece of My Heart." So like the song says and Janis Joplin entreats, "Come on, come on...you know you got it if it makes you feel good." And yes this show certainly does make you feel good. It is an anthem of self-affirmation so be prepared to leave the theatre with a smile on your face and hope in your heart.

Merged Work Productions (lead producers) and Jack Thomas (Executive Producer) are behind Piece of My Heart which is in performance at The Irene Diamond Stage at The Pershing Square Signature Center through September 14, 2014. Featuring a cast of sixteen and a band of eight, Piece of My Heart has a book by Daniel Goldfarb, with direction and choreography by Denis Jones.

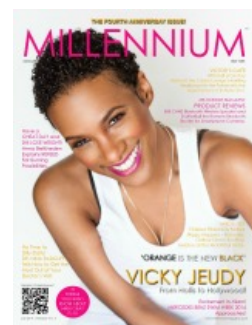
However it's apparent there is an outstanding creative team behind this extraordinarily genuine production notably Alexander Dodge (Scenic Design), David Woolard (Costume Design), Ben Stanton (Lighting Design), Carl Casella (Sound Design), Garry Sherman (Music Supervision & Orchestrations) and Lon Hoyt (Music Direction). "Here Comes the Night: The Dark Soul of Bert Berns and the Dirty Business of Rhythm and Blues" by award-winning journalist and best-selling author Joel Selvin, is another look at Bert Berns' life story published by Counterpoint Press. A documentary film about the life and music of Berns starring Paul McCartney, Solomon Burke and Ben E. King is also in the works.



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