

Technically not a media review as David Nichols attended *Closer Than Ever* on his own, without assignment from his normal employer (The LA Times). But as an active member of the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle, we felt his Facebook post qualified as critical notice, albeit personal and informal. — Good People Theater Co



David C. Nichols

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Objectivity Be Hanged, Very Special Production Alert:

Yesterday, saw the opening performance of [Good People Theater Company's](#) spare, affecting revival of Maltby & Shire's "Closer Than Ever," at Hollywood Piano in Burbank. Here, director [Janet Miller](#) and musical director [Corey Hirsch](#) turn the piece into a mega-intimate, delicately pointed cabaret of the mid-life crisis-ridden mind. It must be the first show one has ever seen in a piano store, but that's the least of what makes it special. For starters, Lady Janet keeps the movement and histrionics to a bare minimum, so the scope of that wonderful tunestack (each and every song a veritable one-act play, character piece and/or social tone poem) rises to the surface. And then there are the four performers, who interact, interchange and harmonize with honest aplomb, emotional insight and melodic accuracy (Mr. Hirsch gets the maximum in unforced, post-Swingle Singers vocal blend, and his piano accompaniment is, as ever, lush). Sara J. Stuckey and David Zack are perhaps more actors who can sing, Gabriel Kalomas and Jessie Withers singers who can act, and that they come off as a unified whole, and the variants of technique make their individual efforts consistently interesting, funny and/or touching, is a testament to their talents and the material's still-trenchant depth. Was particularly taken by Mr. Kalomas' funny, frenetic "I'll Get Up Tomorrow Morning," Ms. Stuckey's wry "Miss Byrd" and rending "Life Story," Mr. Zacks' dulcet "One of the Good Guys," and certainly Ms. Withers' introspective "Patterns" and go-for-the-jazz-jugular "Back on Base," in which bassist Brenton Kossak (who alternates with Jordan Lamoureux) is an invaluable participant. But really, enjoyed the entire thing, especially the clever reconfiguring of ensemble numbers, all of which land like gangbusters, and the choice to give Mr. Hirsch the near-climactic "If I Sing" is a stunning masterstroke. If these rambling off-the-cuff thoughts sound like a love letter, well, that's about right. Delightful, insightful and remarkable. Don't miss it.

