



EIKE SCHROBER

Connie, played by Nia Vardalos, and Carla, played by Toni Collette, perform as their drag queen alter egos in "Connie and Carla."

Victor/Victorious

'Connie and Carla' borrows heavily from past cross-dressing camp

movie review
"CONNIE AND CARLA"

Stars
Nia Vardalos, Toni Collette and David Duchovny

Theaters
Southroads 20, Tulsa and Starworld 20

Studio
Universal Pictures
Running Time: 97 minutes

Rated
PG-13 (sexual humor, drug references, adult themes)

Quality
★★
(on a scale of zero to four stars)

By DENNIS KING
World Scene Writer

"Connie and Carla" might as well be titled "Some Like It Warmed Over." It's a strictly by-the-cookbook rehashing of Billy Wilder's 1959 cross-dressing classic "Some Like It Hot," except with two on-the-lam gals pretending to be guys passing as dames in a flamboyant Los Angeles drag queen revue.

With its high camp quotient and its extravagant gender-bending sensibility, it also borrows copiously from such fey larks as "La Cage Aux Folles" and "Victor/Victoria."

The film's utter lack of originality might be cause enough to dismiss it out of hand, were it not for the notoriety it carries from being writer-star Nia Vardalos' follow-up to her wildly successful "My Big Fat Greek Wedding."

Vardalos could have made any movie she wanted after the bonanza she scored with her low-budget, sitcom-styled hit about smothering ethnic families. For whatever reason, she pulled this old script out of her filing

drawer (she says she wrote it before her "Greek Wedding" success) and used her considerable clout to bring it singing to life.

If nothing else, this is one hotsytotsy singing extravaganza.

"Connie and Carla" features Vardalos and Australian actress Toni Collette ("The Sixth Sense" and "Muriel's Wedding") as cheeky, lifelong girlfriends who are crazy about show tunes.

So intoxicated are they by the sounds of their own brassy voices belting out Broadway chestnuts from "Cats" to "Cabaret" to "Oklahoma!" that they labor away in obscurity as chanteuses at a dingy cocktail lounge in the Chicago airport wowing weary travelers waiting for their connections to Tulsa and points beyond.

But their dead-end singing aspirations get a jolt of cold, cruel reality when one night the girls witness a gangland murder. Quick as you can say Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis, Connie and Carla are running for their lives, with a squad of goonish-cartoonish hit men on their trail.

So they end up in funky West Hollywood, where they not-so-discreetly

pass themselves off as warbling drag queens in a glittery, popular nightclub musical revue.

As girls pretending to be men pretending to be girls, Vardalos and Collette get themselves up in garish gowns, beneath big-hair bouffant wigs and trowels full of make-up, and they strut their stuff on stage on their way to becoming the new sensations of the drag-queen world.

Naturally, this causes all sorts of comic complications for two girls who are supposedly lying low and hiding out.

Things are further muddled when Vardalos' Connie falls head over stiletto heels for a sad-sack named Jeff (David Duchovny, looking slightly ill-at-ease in what amounts to the Marilyn Monroe role). He's a straight-laced guy who's in L.A. to make amends with his estranged and fabulously gay brother Robert (Tony Award-winner Stephen Spinella of "Angels in America"), a performer at the drag club.

Under the steady hand of director Michael Lembeck, a TV veteran of the

SEE CONNIE D-7

Mayfest again to welcome national performers

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The 2004 Tulsa International Mayfest, May 13-16 in downtown Tulsa, will once again feature national headliners, something it hasn't done since 2001.

Poncho Sanchez and his Latin jazz group will perform May 14, and country singer Kellie Coffey will perform May 15.

Jeff Nix, who booked the acts, had high praise for both.

Nix said Sanchez, who won a Grammy in 1999 for his disc "Latin Soul," will be "one of the most interesting acts ever to play Tulsa."

He attributed that to Sanchez's blend of Latin, salsa and jazz that is "really, really unusual."

"I think they will turn heads plumb around," Nix said about Sanchez's band.

He said Coffey is "a bona fide up-and-coming act."

"She has an excellent voice and great stage presence," Nix said about the winner of the 2003 Academy of Country Music's Top New Female Vocalist award. "I think she's going to be a breakout artist."

Youth Art Gallery seeking artists

Mayfest also is looking for a few good kids.

Good with pencils or paints, metals or wood, ceramics or stone, that is. The annual festival is seeking entries for the Mayfest Youth Art Gallery.

This gallery, open to all Tulsa area students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, will be on display in the Robert J. Lafortune Room in the Tulsa Performing Arts Center, Third Street and Cincinnati Avenue, during the run of the festival.

In order to be included in the show, artwork must be delivered by April 28 to the offices of Downtown Tulsa Unlimited, 321 S. Boston Ave., Suite 100.

All work must be ready to be hung or displayed. Also, each piece must have a tag that lists the artist's name, school, grade level and medium used. The tag must be able to be removed without damaging the artwork.

Judges will select winners according to grade levels — primary (pre-kindergarten to second grade), intermediate (third to fifth grades) middle school (sixth to eighth) and senior (ninth to 12th).

The top three winners in each grade level will receive cash prizes. Judges will also select several honorable mentions.

For more information, call Maia Weaver, youth gallery director, at 746-6899, or e-mail her at Weaverma@tulsaschools.org.



Courtesy

Since the late '70s, Poncho Sanchez has been an influential figure in Latin jazz.

Ungerman to lead new weekly blues jam

john & matt
WOOLEY & GLEASON



sounds like ours

Here's a report from the "one door shuts, another opens" file: Saturday marks the last night for jazz-blues vocalist **Rebecca Ungerman** and guitarist **Terry Cooper** to play at Lanna Thai, 7227 S. Memorial Drive, ending a weekly gig the duo's had for about a year and a half. However, May 1 their friends and fans can find them at the Bourbon Street Cafe, 1542 E. 15th St., beginning at 7 p.m. Bassist **Alan Ransom** is scheduled to join them for the kickoff of a weekly event there called the New Players' Blues Jam.

"At first, the guest musicians will be students from Terry's guitar school," says

Ungerman, "but as far as I know, it's open to any player. I'm still going to be singing a lot. It's going to be us doing our thing, as well as encouraging young talent to grow."

Ungerman also has begun singing at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays at St. Michael's Alley, 3324 E. 31st St., with pianist **Spencer Sutton**. In addition, she's set to work a date on Wednesday with keyboardist **Jon Glazer** next Tuesday at Cronies, 520 E. Third St.

—J.W.

SEE SOUNDS D-7



Local diva **Rebecca Ungerman** soon will sing for a weekly blues jam.

STEPHEN PINGRY/
Tulsa World