

today's review



Adam Rapa (left) and Frankie Frazzoli take drumming to a new level in Blast!, a choreographed drum and bugle show.

'Blast!' turns band into giddy spectacle

By Kyle Lawson
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Take every marching band you've heard. Every ball show you've watched. Now, forget 'em.

Blast! does it bigger, better and, most assuredly, louder.

It was inevitable in this era of Riverdance, Top Gun and Stomp that someone would take a drum and bugle corps, gussy it up, choreograph it to the point of exhaustion, surround it with lighting worthy of an '80s lyric concert and turn it loose on the world.

Only who would have thought it would be such fun? Fifty-four percussionists and brass players — mostly in their 20s, extremely fit, incredibly talented — never stop for two hours as they dance, sing, march, twirl, somersault, flip and otherwise astound Gammage Auditorium audiences.

It's a bravura display of musicianship, showmanship and one-up-manship — especially when Nicholas Angelis and Christopher Chatham square off on the drums.

Tuesday's audience could barely contain itself, jumping to its feet on three separate occasions to applaud the pair.

Anyone who's ever called band members geeks is going

'Blast!'
Reviewed Tuesday at Gammage Auditorium, Gammage Parkway and Mid Avenue, Tampa. Concludes through Monday. Tickets for families: \$15, 75, \$58.75. (480) 965-3434.

no chink on the insults. Blast! isn't without flaws. It's a bit repetitive — here comes another flag routine, look, they're twirling those sticks again. There's also a distracting tendency to perform the eclectic score — ranging from Bayreuth's *Ride of the Valkyries* to *Officer Krupke* from *West Side Story* — at full throttle, warring havoc on music. (Free earplugs are available in the lobby for the acutely sensitive.)

Mostly, though, it's just an evening of jaw-dropping, happily enjoyable entertainment. And when the pace finally slows for an a cappella version of *Simple Gifts*, or when trumpeter Frank Sullivan and Adam Rapa are given solo moments to shine, or when a line of musicians transforms itself into a hypnotic spiral, it even comes darn close to art.

Reach the reporter at (800) 444-8947.

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