

# Gidget Goes Psychotic

---

THE NEW YORK NATIVE, NOVEMBER 3, 1986

---

By Terry Helbing

To borrow a phrase from AM radio, the hits just keep on coming -- or at least they seem to for Charles Busch, *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* is in its 17th month at the Provincetown Playhouse, he's been asked to write a pilot for CBS, and as if that weren't enough to occupy his time, Busch and company try out new plays at their first home, the now considerably spruced-up Limbo Lounge. *Pardon My Inquisition* showcased there a while back, and currently the last of Busch's first cycle of Limbo plays, the long-awaited *Gidget Goes Psychotic*, is holding forth in grand style.

All the stock characters of the interminable Gidget saga are here, doing all the things you expect of them at a 1961 Malibu beach: Larue, Moondoggie, the Great Kahoonah, assorted beach boys and girls, and of course, Gidget. But instead of a wise kindly father, Gidget must cope with Helen Lawrence, whom Busch has modeled after that great Mommie Dearest of modern times. Perhaps that's why Gidget is more than the happy-go-lucky teen we first assume her to be. Several people more, in fact, as Gidget's character takes on Sybil-like dimension and dementia. Most visible is Anne Bowman, an S/M dominatrix with plans for conquering the world.

Not to worry, this is not the stuff of TV-movie problem drama. You can imagine what the Limbo company does with the material. Words like silly, hysterical, hilarious, outrageous, and all the rest seem inadequate to describe just how funny and outlandish the latest Busch epic really is.

This company of actors has been working together for some time now, and under the sure guidance of director Kenneth Elliott, are capable of both accomplished ensemble, playing and numerous stand-out individual performances.

Regulars Robert Carey and Andy Halliday are adorable as two surfer boys who discover there's more than two surfboards to keep them warm. Becky London is the quintessential Larue, while Michael Belanger is right on the money as Gidget's man-hungry girlfriend. Ralph Buckley both swaggers and cowers as Kahoonah. Theresa Marlowe continues displaying her coquettish charms as starlet Bettina Barnes, while Meghan Robinson seems to live the role of, ahem, Helen Lawrence.

And what is left to be said about *la diva* Busch? His rubbery features makes him the man of a thousand faces, his timing is impeccable, and he handles his

character transformations well enough to worry Sally Field. He's truly a community treasure. Robert Locke's costumes and Elizabeth Katherine Carr's hair perfectly evoke the period, no doubt as much to the delight of the actors as the audience.

It's tempting to say that *Gidget Goes Psychotic* is the best Busch to date, but perhaps it's because it's the most recent. When you think of the hard-boiled dialogue of *Times Square Angel*, the outrageous campiness of *Vampire Lesbians*, etc., you might be hard-pressed to pick a favorite. Possible trademark problems with the title might prevent a commercial transfer, but let's hope they can be worked out. Everyone deserves a chance to see more of the girl midget.