

t h e a t e r

Harold ♥ Maude



Out talent Eric Millegan tells all about playing Harold in a new musical version of the '70s cult classic film **By Michael Giltz**

Harold and Maude—the cult classic 1971 film starring 70-something Ruth Gordon and 20-something Bud Cort as unconventional lovers—is starting to sing out. A new musical version with book and lyrics by Tom Jones (of *The Fantasticks* fame) and music by Joseph Thalken just opened at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, N.J. It runs through February 6, with Oscar-winner Estelle Parsons (*Bonnie and Clyde*) as Maude and rising star Eric Millegan as Harold.

Though the movie isn't gay, it has always spoken to gay viewers—including Millegan, who remembers that when he first rented it he did so because a new friend (now his partner of seven years) said that he'd be perfect as Harold if a musical version were ever made. "It's about 'Be with the person you're in love with.' It doesn't matter if she's 60 years older than you or, if you're a gay man, if it's a man," says Millegan. His favorite song in the show, he adds, is "the last song that Maude sings to Harold, called 'The Chance to Sing.' I think that will be the favorite of a lot of people."

Millegan prepared for the role of an

Internet-surfing masturbator in the movie *On Line* by chatting up men in a "bear" chat room—not to mention tearing off his shirt and shoving his hand down his pants for the audition. So you might worry about his preparations for playing the depressive-before-depressive-was-cool Harold.

"I've played a lot of suicidal people, actually," says a laughing Millegan, who was born in New Jersey, raised in Oregon, and now lives in Manhattan. "I was suicidal in *On Line*. I did a workshop a few years ago [in which] my character actually shot himself in the head. I must project something."

Unlike Harold, Millegan has nothing to be sad about. He's appeared in a series of high-profile workshops lately, including a new musical version of *Mask* by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil; his August birthday celebration performance in a cabaret got great reviews; and being out in the media hasn't slowed down his career one bit. "One year [after coming out]," says Millegan, "I have the best job I've ever had." ■

Giltz writes for publications including the New York Post.

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