

All Shook Up

Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society

Civic Theatre - 28th September 2017

Review for The Journal by Cheryl Jennings

I really don't know where to start with my praise of this production. I was a little sceptical on hearing that our local, well established amateur society was intending to stage a rock 'n' roll musical but CAODS unquestionably pulled it off.

All Shook Up is an American jukebox musical featuring the music of Elvis Presley and with a gag-laden book by Joe DiPietro. The story is very loosely based on William Shakespeare's play Twelfth Night. It uses many Elvis hits such as Jailhouse Rock, Love Me Tender, One Night With You, It's Now or Never and the title song All Shook Up and is set in 1955 in a straight-laced little town in the Midwest. All is about to change when Chad arrives, a guitar-playing roustabout who influences everything and everyone he meets in this hip-gyrating, lip-curling show that had us jumping out of our blue suede shoes.

From the very start CAODS captured the spirit of this well written and hilarious musical, beautifully cast, with actors who made the most of every funny line and an energetic, supporting chorus who looked as good as they sounded. There were many fine performances to talk about here so first in line is the leading man, Chad, played by Simon Bristoe. The audience loved him! He sang well and could certainly swivel those hips but best of all he kept us laughing the entire evening with his send up of this character. A brilliant comedy actor, he had us in the palm of his hand, at times we were laughing uncontrollably. Our heroine was Natalie (Tamara Anderson), a grease monkey and tomboy working at the garage, who fell for Chad's charms even though she was as far removed from his ideal girl as it was possible to be. To wear a ridiculous painted on beard, dress as a man for practically the entire show and carry it off with incredible humour was no mean feat, added to which she has a great voice. Oli Budino played Dennis, a bit of a nerd, an aspiring dentist and in love with Natalie. He is another good singer and captured the character perfectly. Cassie Estall was Miss Sandra, the beautiful caretaker of the town's museum with full on sex appeal! She looked totally stunning and must have had a ball playing this part to the very hilt – great performance Cassie. Robyn Gowers was perfectly cast as Sylvia, owner of Sylvia's Honky Tonk. Rough and tough with a soft side, she brought this character to life and gave a lovely rendition of 'There's Always Me', another fine performance. The young lovers of this piece were delightfully played by Charlotte Broad and Dannii Carr, both with excellent voices and David Slater also made a fine job of Jim the garage owner, a widower, recapturing his youth and finding love again. There was also a loud and domineering portrayal of Mayor Matilda by the irrepressible Debbie Sparshott, very funny. The plot twisted and turned with love triangles, gender confusion and unrequited love until of course finally everything was satisfactorily resolved. All this was further enhanced by an ensemble who were obviously having immense fun, I bet rehearsals were a blast!

In conclusion I'd like to offer my congratulations to all those involved in this production and end with one more comment. Everyone who missed this show missed one of the best laughs and most enjoyable amateur theatrical experiences of 2017. In the words of an Elvis song that actually wasn't included in this show 'It was a night, ooh what a night it was, it really was – such a night!'