

All Shook Up

CAODS, Friday 29 September

From the opening iconic image into Jailhouse Rock the show explodes onto the stage with a wide variety of Elvis inspired music – however let's be clear this is not a show for an Elvis Impersonator or Elvis tribute artist, Chad the roustabout is a leather-clad, sexually charged motorbiker who shares some of Elvis's pelvic moves but that's really where the similarity ends.

Simon Bristoe as Chad, played the part perfectly with just the right amount of comedy and hip swiveling to make us realise this isn't Elvis but Chad and Simon has an amazing stage personality and great talent which kept us laughing throughout and allowed us to enjoy every second of his portrayal of Chad in this production.

Tamara Anderson as Natalie is the perfect partner for Simon, She has such versatile facial expressions and an amazing voice and the two of them together was a match made in heaven. She embodied Natalie and her male alter ego Ed, in every way.

Playing the towns loveable nerd Dennis is Oli Budino who delivers a heart-warming performance, my only comment is that I felt his Solo "It Hurts Me" in Act 2 was over powered by the orchestra who were far too loud and drowned out his number. Cassie Estall as Miss Sandra oozed sexuality aided perfectly by her tight-fitting wardrobe, gave a confident performance. By contrast, Robyn Gowers as Sylvia showed her experience and stage presence in this role and her solo "There's always me" was delivered with great aplomb. Playing opposite her as Jim was David Slater who alongside his quirky dancing and misplaced dress sense gave a touching delivery as the widower trying to find love after heartbreak.

The young lovers Charlotte Broad as Lorraine and Dannii Carr as Dean were both endearing to watch and sang and performed beautifully together. As Major Matilda Deborah Sparshott was both powerful and domineering and Philip Spurgeon as the down trodden Sheriff Earl who finally finds his voice complete the principal line up.

All the musical numbers were so sharp and the choreography was spot on with a mix of 50's and 60's dance steps which were performed by the cast with exceptional precision. I particularly loved seeing 4 strong male dancers in the ensemble! Sally Warrington gave the society an outstanding production which is possibly the best I've seen in Chelmsford for several years.

My only other comment was that I felt the upper level of the set was underused and could have offered lots of other potential opportunities both as a performance level but also with gobos or similar to brighten up the stage but these are small comments because the show rocked the theatre and gave us one of the most enjoyable nights of theatre we have had in a long time. Often on some amateur shows you can pick out weak members but there definitely wasn't a weak cast member in this show – which is a huge credit to the society.

If you haven't seen it - then get tickets and be ready to dance in the aisles – there's no doubt you'll be "All Shook Up".

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