

NODA REVIEW

GREASE (School Version)

Performed by Viva Youth

This version of the iconic show which is *Grease* has been shortened and is more suitable in content for performance by teens and subteens, this abridged version retains the fun-loving spirit and immortal songs that make *Grease* a favourite among rock and roll fans of all ages. The School Edition eliminates all of the references to and uses of cigarettes and alcohol, as well as any swearing or bad language.

This production was full of energy from the start. Directed by **Ben Clark**, I was impressed with the sheer enthusiasm of the cast. The opening ensemble number "Grease is the Word" was sung and danced with great energy and obvious enjoyment, setting the scene for the remaining performance.

The set was simple with fold out panels and stage trucks to create the many scenes necessary and all used to good effect. The "Greased Lightning" car certainly had the "wow" factor. The scene changes were swiftly dealt with by a very hardworking stage crew. All this plus good costumes, and with the whole being complimented by some good lighting. With only one exception there was no problem with radio mics. With a show so packed full of songs, as *Grease* is, it is important the action between the musical numbers does not become second best otherwise the pace drops. However the pace was good throughout. Just a general comment though, do not confuse enthusiasm with speed of dialogue. Sometimes lines were lost because they were rushed.

The principal characters were well cast :

Max Bovingdon as Danny Zuko, was suitably arrogant, accepting of the girls' adulation. His was a confident and excellent performance. The young actor has great stage presence.

I enjoyed **Riley Williams** as Sandy, in a nice portrayal of the character, she clearly showed the difference between innocence and naivety in the first half, and the more confident Sandy in the second half, and certainly pulled off the transformation for the final song "You're the one that I want" and I particularly enjoyed "Hopelessly Devoted To You". A musical theatre career is surely on the cards for this young lady.

Olly Manley gave us a very strong Kenickie, maintaining the character throughout and had good stage presence. His musical number "Greased Lightning", performed with the T Birds, was excellent, full of energy and certainly an audience pleaser.

Eloise George as Kenickie's counterpart the feisty Rizzo, was perfectly cast, oozing attitude in every scene.

Kiera O'Reilly gave a great portrayal of the 'always hungry' Jan and with good comic timing.

Frenchy was played by **Summer Dowling** who did an excellent job. She brought great empathy to her performance. The "Beauty School Drop Out" scene led by Teen Angel **Zak Potts** supported by his dancers was very well done.

Elisha Cardwell was confident in the role of Marty bringing a nice interpretation to "Freddy My Love". The Pink Ladies were obviously a team, the sense of friendship clearly came across.

The 'T' Birds all worked well together. In an enjoyable performance **Corbin Abbasi** playing Doody delivered his musical numbers well with a nice bit of guitar playing thrown in for good measure. **Conor Caughtry** as Roger was good as was **Mark O'Reilly** as Sonny. In fact there was a good believable relationship created by the boys.

Zack Wymer as the hapless Eugene, gave a good account of himself and was fun to watch. He was well matched by **Dresden Goodwin** as Patty, the eccentric cheer leader. In other minor roles, **Joseph Beach** played night club singer Johnny Casino well, **Angela Warder** was confident in the sexy role of Cha Cha and it was nice to see **Deylon Horton** again this time as Vince Fontaine. The part of the Miss Lynch was played by **Megan Godfrey** loud of voice and strong on discipline.

The 50 plus members of the cast really threw themselves into this show. The very familiar and famous songs were delivered with skill and enthusiasm by all involved. The vocal talents of the Company as a whole were good. The voices of the principal singers impressive to say the least.

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Louise Plummer's choreography was fresh, energetic and suited the abilities of the large age range of the cast. Every number was executed well and the most important thing - everyone looked like they were having terrific fun! The 'Born to Hand Jive' routine was fast and furious but everyone, even the smallest cast member, kept up and kept the actions going. It was super.

Music was in the capable hands of Musical Director ~**Melody Bell** and her band who contributed to the success of the show and, like the cast, called upon to work hard.

This was an incredibly enjoyable show with excellent input from all concerned making it an extremely pleasurable evening's entertainment. Congratulations Director Ben Clark and the cast of Viva's Grease.

Julie Petrucci
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