

MADE IN DAGENHAM

Performed by Viva at The Brook, Soham
Directed by Dan Schumann
Musical Director: Melody Bell
Choreographer: Louise Plummer

Following the recent musical adaptation of the 2010 film about the 1968 female workers' strike at the Dagenham Ford car factory female-rich musical companies up and down the country are now rushing to take on this show and I am not surprised. I saw the previews of the London show and have loved it ever since.

Made in Dagenham is a mix of comedy and drama while serving up a feel-good slice of nostalgic British history although with the musical the dramatic storyline becomes slightly watered down. The show plays heavily on Richard Bean's (*One Man, Two Guv'nors*) comedic and feel-good script at the expense of the storyline's dramatic elements, but is, nevertheless, a great show.

With a plentiful supply of talented pace and energy, under the experienced direction of DAN SCHUMANN, in some well-cast roles the 15 plus workers in the women's shed where Ford's car seats are finished threw themselves into it with KIRSTEN MARTIN more noticeable than most obviously enjoying shocking the audience on numerous occasions through potty-mouthed Beryl.

KERRY HIBBERT was absolutely excellent in the role of Rita, the line-worker who is all-too-quickly forced into the Union spotlight - much to the chagrin of her male co-workers, and to the detriment of her family life. I just wish she had been afforded more time onstage to make the most of what dramatic moments she does have - namely with husband, Eddie (superbly played by BEN CLARK) and co-worker, Connie Riley (sensitively played by MARY BARNES).

There was strong support from all the women especially the flappy and indecisive Clare (played by HANNAH SCHUMANN) and ambitious Cass (SAMMY WILLIAMS). In fact, all the raucous female ensemble did well with several stand-out performances. We were also treated to a couple of very good cameo performances from DONNA KITCHING (Mrs Hopkins) and JENNY SURRIDGE impressive as Barbara Castle

Collectively, I enjoyed the men, especially as an ensemble of factory workers. All very believable. Several stand-out performances here too especially DAVID TICKNER as Monty, DAN LANE (doubling Bill/Tooley) and JOSH SCHUMANN (Hopkins). FRANK CROSBY gave us a rather edgy Harold Wilson but an excellent personnel director in Mr Hubble, in fact the grievance procedure scene when Hopkins, Hubble and Macer (GEOFF FISHER) met with Monty, Connie and Rita was a joy.

Technically things worked very smoothly. Staging was just a brick wall with an inset screen with some good slide projection depicting time and place. Costumes for the ladies brought back memories! Good properties - loved the sewing machines. I was also impressed with the mainly swift scene changes carried out by cast and crew.

Aptly named Musical Director MELODY BELL and expert Choreographer LOUISE PLUMMER did a grand job of the music and dancing on what is a pretty small stage at The Brook but the excellent cast did everyone proud, producing some very amusing and entertaining onstage chemistry while, at the same time, doing a great job with the many catchy musical numbers. A splendid show!

Viva is off to Edinburgh with the show shortly but there will be a second chance to catch it when *Made in Dagenham* returns to the ADC Theatre in Cambridge in September.

Julie Petrucci

Regional Representative. NODA East, District Four South