

NODA Review

SUFFOLKATION

NOMADS Newmarket

The Kings Theatre Newmarket

Written and Directed by Ian Bedford

Musical Director Mark Aldous

Movement: Fiona Maquire

Having previously presented Ian Bedford's plays NOMADS premiered his new musical comedy *Suffolkation* at The Kings Theatre. Set in the Cooder Hell Bar and cellar the script is full of quirky (some would say stock) characters and original songs containing incredibly witty lyrics. Musical Director Mark Aldous who created the entire score from a sheet of lyrics with chord symbols did a superb job which resulted in some lively musical numbers.

I have to say the bar area of the set was splendidly realistic and lots of attention had been paid to obtaining authentic props. Personally I think it would have been better to have had a "wall" which could have been folded back to maybe create the wall of the cellar rather than the large black curtain which was rather incongruous and detracted from the wonderful bar. Costumes, wigs and make-up were very good and the sound balance too was spot on. Apart from the cellar scenes, which would have benefitted from a slight overspill to light the singer standing, the lighting was good. During the overture, as Bob the Landlord and the local regulars gathered, rather disconcertingly the auditorium lights remained on full. This resulted in murmurings from those in the audience who thought the lighting technician had forgotten to dim them.

Many songs in musicals move the story on and here the witty lyrics told of the characters little foibles or experiences. It was important therefore to hear all the lyrics which unfortunately, for me at any rate, wasn't always the case. Lots of references to local villages and situations peppered the plot with many in the audience relating to them. A big reaction came when one character requested a glass of tap water and was asked the question "clear or cloudy?" which appeared to resonate with those sitting close by me. There was a great exit down the "cellar steps" by the 5 customers which was highly amusing.

There were very good characterisations from all members of 8-strong cast, most of whom also sang the witty songs. Steven Fenn as Bob the Landlord still accommodated his regular drinkers as usual even in the face of his pub being demolished and demonstrated he was a pretty nifty jive dancer in his day. Bronco (played by Trevor Kartupelis) proudly sporting his late father's ring allegedly worn by Elvis, astounded his cronies by singing about marrying a girl from Norfolk. The two American tourists played by Teresa Baron (Fran) and Liz Rolph (Jackie) kept their accents going reasonably well whilst being "wound up" by Duncan (John Bedford) getting them to read place names such as Wymondham. John's Council Official Duncan was believable as he sang about NIMBYS whilst absolving himself from all responsibility of unpopular council decisions under protest with that old get out of "my hands are tied". Excellent performances by Cat Blacker as Nadia a Polish Care Worker and Jane Moulton as Bronco's sister Brenda stalking the Fen Tiger in true Annie Oakley style. The cast was completed by Chris Brighty as the Police Officer.

It is always a leap of faith for a society to present new writing and full marks to NOMADS to taking the risk with this untried musical. It is gratifying to see that some performances were sold out with NOMADS' regular bookers being augmented by Ian Bedford's Chuck Cash and the Fenland Cowboys' fans.

Congratulations to all involved it was, as promised, a unique Suffolk flavoured theatrical experience.

Julie Petrucci

Regional Representative NODA East District Four South.

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