

Spring 2011 - 'All Shook Up'

Joint Winner, Best Musical in NODA Eastern Region District 6 in 2011

The format of a rock-music score backing a strong youth-oriented story line is always a favourite - look at 'Disco Inferno' and 'Forbidden Planet' - so we gave it another run in spring 2011. And boy, were we glad we did! It's always tempting to say that a show is "the best yet", but this really was! From the opening scene it was clear that this production was going to be a massive hit. Stage Director John Cushing came up with an innovative design relying on lighting and video projection to set the scene, with Musical Director Chris Steed marshalling his forces behind the actors to give the maximum impact to the musical numbers. Everyone on stage rose magnificently to the occasion, really "living" their roles with great confidence, and the technical team didn't disappoint with the split-second timing of their effects and lighting changes. A truly fantastic team performance which can only enhance the Group's reputation as the premier musical theatre company in the area.

'All Shook Up' is based on Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' and uses the music of Elvis Presley to tell a story of life and love in the American Mid-West of the 1950's. It was decided that, because it was bound to be popular in the UK following its success on Broadway, we would have to apply to stage it sooner rather than later and so were delighted to get it all "signed, sealed & delivered".

The scene was set on Opening Night as the cast, pit-singers, band and technical team brought this complex show together to the delight of an enthusiastic audience. Confidence steadily grew during the week, with each performance building on the last, so by the time Last Night arrived everyone was really rockin' and rollin'!

Looking back, the very well-attended Preview Evening gave the production team an opportunity to tell us what it's all about and to play some of the music from the show. The detailed ins and outs of the plot (yes, there is a plot!) were revealed at the script Read-Through and then came the Principals' Auditions. We always hope that the auditions will bring forth previously undiscovered talents and this time was no exception. The Panel were treated to a number of outstanding performances, which didn't make the task of selecting a cast any easier! After much deliberation, however, all roles were filled without any need to twist arms or search about for additional "volunteers" - must be a first! Those who were delighting us with the sounds of "The King" were:-

Chad - Ian Cook

Natalie Haller - Ruth Alder

Dennis - Stephen Brown

Lorraine - Bethan Roscoe

Dean Hyde - David Johnson

Mayor Matilda - Anna Fisher

Jim Haller - Jason Lambert

Miss Sandra - Debbie Burr

Sheriff Earl - Bob Sharman

Sylvia - Debbie Lambert

Many congratulations to all those mentioned, but particularly to Ruth, Bethan, David and Debbie B. for securing their first principal roles. We also welcome Debbie Lambert, joining her husband Jason after his success in 'Guys & Dolls' last year, and Stephen & Anna who return after a short break. What a wonderful mix of established players and new talent - a really strong cast throughout.

Next up were the auditions for the on-stage chorus and dancers. They were supposed to be on 29th November but unfortunately the early snows dictated otherwise, so we rescheduled things for 15th December. Such was the breadth of talent discovered on the night that two teams of on-stage "movers & shakers" have been selected, giving a little more flexibility when it comes to staging. This didn't make our Musical Director's job of recruiting his "pit chorus" of off-stage singers any easier, but he was finally able to put together a very able band of close-harmony devotees. Then all he had to do was organise some rehearsals! These actually began in early January, with staging running from February onwards. Things steadily built to a double-crescendo of two all-day Sunday rehearsals, when each Act was finally put together, before the final run to the line when everything was polished and sharpened. The tumultuous applause of our audiences during the week was a sure sign that things came out rather well!