



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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PO Box 738
MODBURY SA 5092

info@theatreguide.com.au
ABN : 93 297 960 525

GREASE (JUNIOR CAST)

Pelican Productions

Walford Theatre

Until 14 July 2013

Review by Brian Godfrey

This reviewer never ceases to be amazed by the potential and talent displayed by the youngsters of this state. Pelican Productions are presenting the 'school edition' version of the Fifties tribute musical "Grease", and it is a fairly slick production.

Although sanitised – with certain lyrics replaced and Rizzo's big solo "There Are Worse Things I Could Do" omitted – this musical is still a big ask for children aged under thirteen, with its many American Fifties references that would seem like ancient history to these youngies, and songs originally designed for adult voices. Carol Young confidently and ably directs these youngsters out of their comfort zone into areas they would not normally traverse – with good, enjoyable effect.

Young makes sure that her young cast use the stage and the biggest, brightest juke box set ever (wonderfully and cleverly designed by Jen Frith and Kylie Green) extremely well. She is also responsible for the great sounding adult band – watch and listen for a fantastic saxophone solo by Chris Soole during 'Greased Lightning'!

Bec Schembri's choreography is energetic, stylish and very well performed by the entire cast. In fact, it is the dance sequences along with the energy and exuberance of all the young performers that drive the show and make it a fun, entertaining experience.

With a show like this, one would like to mention the entire cast, but it just isn't possible with so many children involved – each and every one does well.

However, there are always those that stand out: Amy Gallery is a teeny tiny Olivia Newton John as Sandy, nicely sweet and innocent but able to change swiftly into her 'bad' girl persona when required at the end; Izaak Westhead is absolutely fantastic as Danny Zuko bringing boyish charm, a deep rich singing voice (unusual for someone his age) and some excellent dance moves to the part; as Rizzo, Monica Horta is nicely tough; Finnegan Green is a small Kenickie with a big personality and loads of talent, and is well supported by Calvin Santo, Lucas Horta and Flynn Miller as the Burger Palace Boys.

Caitlin Dennis (Frenchy), Eliza Mortimer-Royle (Jan), Matthew Monti (Eugene), Kate Olsson (Patty Simcox), Sophie Dale (Ms Lynch) and Phoenix Starr-Hentschke as Johnny Casino also all impress. But the real standout vocally is Callum Warrender as Teen Angel – although to call him a 'junior' is a bit of a stretch, his voice is very impressive.

There is a slight technical hitch that does need to be fixed. The balance between stage mics and body mics is out of kilter – when singing on their own, the principals' volume is fine, but as soon as backup singers or the ensemble join in, they are drowned out. The balance also needs to be looked at when various people are on stage delivering dialogue – it is very hard to distinguish who is talking at any one time.

After viewing this production, my faith in our young performers is still extremely strong.