

## **STAINES MUSICAL THEATRE GROUP**

### **'BAD GIRLS' – JULY 2023**

The Riverside Arts Theatre is a new venue for you and a considerably smaller than the Magna Carta Centre but it is well equipped with raked seating and a bar. The only problem from the audience point of view is parking, which is incredibly difficult. I trust this will not limit your audience whilst you wait for the Magna Carta to be refurbished.

A large set would not be possible as it would take up too much room but the projections worked splendidly and the addition of the pieces designed by Dan set the scene firmly. The first projection of the corridors in a jail gave more depth and although the stage is fairly restricting for such a production, you coped really well with it and put across the musical strongly.

I didn't see the series on TV but the musical presents a clear vision of the toughness needed to be in the prison system whilst at the same time recognising different personalities

'Bad Girls' opening scene takes the audience into the rather scary environment of HMP and we were introduced to the motley lot of characters incarcerated there as they sing the age old plea in the song 'I Shouldn't Be Here' – a good opening number.

In the role of the newcomer Rachel, Annelly James looked lost and scared as the others gathered around her threateningly- it must be truly frightening to find oneself in that situation!

Shell and Denny, played by Dawn Sainsbury and Aria Williams, sang 'I'll Be Watching Over You' reinforcing poor Rachel's vulnerability.

Dawn Sainsbury came across strongly as the rough, tough Shell but when it came to injustice, or worse, toward her fellow inmates she showed a more caring side.

Her side-kick Denny tried hard to be cast in the same mould - Arson isn't in the same league as Murder after all – and Aria Williams played the part well. Jim and Sylvia, played by Robert Franck and Carol Martin respectively performed a nice routine as they sang 'Jailcraft' and they were both strong in their roles as the two officers who had big ideas about achieving dizzy heights in the prison service. Carol Martin was the stereotypical no-nonsense prison warden and Robert Franck showed us the seamy side of the exchanging of favours system. Poor Rachel didn't stand a chance with such an experienced and manipulative authority figure.

Lucy Curtis gave a first rate performance as Nikki Wade and her solo 'One Moment' was very powerful. The relationship between her and Helen was nicely handled and their duet was particularly good.

In that role of the wing governor Helen Stewart, Amy Rommer was understanding and generous to the women and she really wanted, and tried, to make their lives more pleasant. She played the role with sensitivity.

Wesley Wooden looked the part of the Number One – Prison Governor and was suitably formal for his important position.

The two Julies, in jail on soliciting and theft charges, were played by Chris Best and Sharon Young who appeared to be having great fun in their roles

and they worked together very well. Julie's telephone call to her son was really moving.

The song 'All Banged Up' with Yvonne, played by Emma Hounsell, was very funny, and the young warder Justin played by Theo Poupart added greatly to the comedy.

Yvonne was a force to be reckoned with and Emma portrayed the larger than life character splendidly - her 'The A List' was another good number and I enjoyed both the Gospel style song by Crystal and 'First Lady' with Shell and Jim.

Every member of the cast added to the musical and they appeared to be not only involved as their characters, but also to be thoroughly enjoying themselves.

The fight at the end of Act One was incredibly realistic and as an audience I'm sure we were grateful that we had never had to experience anything like it.

The opening number in Act Two was great and the blue and gold glitzy costumes made such a contrast to the women's dark tee shirts etc.

An outside area was suggested by the different level stage left for Helen and Justin's meeting and the projection of the night sky was a perfect addition to set that scene.

The cells were set quite simply as were the latrines and it all worked so well. After Rachel's suicide the girls determined to show Jim up for what he was and that scene was impressively handled.

Scenes were changed quickly and quietly by the back stage crew.

The band was on the floor of the theatre and Guy Bunce led them beautifully. Sound was balanced and the volume was nicely controlled. All the musical numbers are catchy and memorable and cover a variety of styles – I loved them all!

Annelly's choreography was attractive and the cast were well-rehearsed in the routines.

Your programme is easy to negotiate and read and the front cover is striking.

Because of the fairly compact stage at The Riverside Theatre 'Bad Girls' was not an easy show to stage, but Dan did it brilliantly. I thoroughly enjoyed the production and each and every person should be proud to have been involved in it.

Thank you for inviting me to see 'Bad Girls' and also for your very kind hospitality on the evening.

I look forward to seeing you all again later in the year and wish you a very happy Summer.

E. Gloria Smith

NODA SE. Regional Representative – District 12

