



Joanne Thornewell

Review: Rock of Ages, Lyceum Theatre Sheffield

Summary

Excellent

Croft rocks Sheffield! An impressive and powerful, full-on production, full of energy, great music and lots of laughs.

This is the first time I've ever seen **Rock of Ages** but I doubt I could have had a better introduction to the show than **Croft House Theatre Company** gave tonight.

The story is fairly lightweight – a wannabe rock singer meets a wannabe actress at the club in which he works. They fall in love, but he doesn't tell her how he feels. Meanwhile corrupt developers want to demolish the club. It's musical theatre so, of course, everything works out in the end.

But that doesn't matter – this show is all about the music and the audience is treated to stirring rock anthems performed by some wonderfully talented vocalists and musicians.

There seemed to be some technical issues with the sound balance in this opening night's performance. In the first half much of the dialogue could not easily be heard over the music, which was such a shame when the cast was clearly giving their all. The second half was much better, so hopefully this is already rectified and won't be a problem for the rest of the run.

The set is the Bourbon Club on Sunset Strip and leaves much of the stage available for the large cast to perform excellent choreographed dance routines from director **Claire Harriott**. This is a very hard working and very talented ensemble. Their singing and dancing are first class.

The five piece band, led by musical director **Matt Symonds**, is stunning. They are on stage throughout and sound amazing with plenty of incredible guitar solos.

Adam Walker and **Grace Hadabora** literally hit all the right notes as Drew and Sherrie. They are both excellent vocalists with great range and ability, comfortable singing power ballads as well as quieter songs, such as 'High Enough' where their voices blend beautifully and the harmonies are glorious. As egotistical rock legend, Stacey Jaxx, **James Smith** oozes charisma and stage presence, revelling in the hero worship of the busy female ensemble. His singing is also strong and seemingly effortless.

The corrupt German developers, father and son Hertz and

Franz Klinemann, are played for laughs by **Phil Brownhill** and **Matt Bevan**. Brownhill amuses as he almost gosesteps on his exits, while Bevan does well as the worm that turned as he falls for protestor, Regina a strong performance from **Tara Kulbatski**. **Helen Green**'s rich voice is perfect for her role as strip club owner, Justice Charlier.

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But the production's acting kudos have to go to **Tom Fox-Owens** and **Mark Holmes**. Their performances as Lonny Barnett and his friend and club owner, Dennis Dupree, are totally engaging and thoroughly enjoyable. They light up the stage every time they appear. Their second half duet 'Can't Fight This Feeling' is absolutely hilarious and a show highlight.

Fox-Owens also excels as he regularly breaks the fourth wall, totally at ease as he interacts directly with the audience. At one point he tells a bemused looking Drew that he's actually in a musical at the moment and his name is Adam. I have no idea if this is actually in the show's script, but if not, it should be! There are many 'stepping out of the narrative' moments like this and they are all delicious.

The quality and talent here is as good as any professional production at the Lyceum. The only difference is that these performers are unpaid and doing it just because they love it. And it shows.