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Rent - Swan Theatre, Worcester



By Steve Carley »

TAKING on such a challenging show as Rent is a brave move by any group and the Webfoot Theatre Company deserve all the credit they get.

The audience certainly appreciated the high-energy performances at the newly-refurbished Swan Theatre, giving the talented cast and chorus a standing ovation.

Although the subject matter - impoverished musicians trying to survive in New York under the shadow of AIDS - isn't to all tastes, the show still rocks out.

It's fast-paced, energetic and Paul Hutton's choreography doesn't let up from start to finish.

Director Hutton also takes on the part of Mark Cohen, through whose eyes the story is told, and he is more than capable in the role.

Dan Wainman's excellent portrayal of drumming drag act Angel stole the show at times, efforts even more remarkable given that he twisted his ankle during La Vie Boheme and was visibly in pain.

Dean Bayliss revelled in the role of aspiring songwriter and former junkie Roger Davis, while Leanne Hollyhead gave a fine performance as Mimi Marquez.

Laura Poyner's vocal skills were to the fore as Maureen Johnson and her wonderfully weird rendition of Over the Moon was one of the highlights.

Louise Beadle and Tim Messent, as Joanne Jefferson and Tom Collins respectively, gave fine support, particularly Messent in the role as Angel's lover.

A special mention also to Mat Jones and his band who kept the pace up throughout for hits such as La Vie Boheme, One Song Glory, Goodbye Love and Seasons of Love.

One criticism, however. At close to 90 minutes, the first act was too long and, with an 8pm start, the show didn't finish until 10.45pm.

That said, it was still superb. Rent runs until Saturday, June 27.



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