

Bush! The Musical



“Thank God the other one’s alright!” - Isn’t it ironic that the best thing about Bush! The Musical, is Al Gore?

Gracing the Greenside stage with the latest [insert niche subject here] musical adaptation, *Bush! The Musical* is an enjoyable romp through the life and times of America’s 43rd President, from his birth as some sort of root vegetable to ascending to the highest office the land. A fun, fast-paced reimagining of the early 2000s with a healthy smattering of mostly-questionable musical interludes and costumes that largely deliver the Fringe aesthetic, this show isn’t quite “a solution to all of this country’s problems”, but if all else fails, it could be a start?

Balancing skilled delivery & writing with bringing these larger-than-life characters to a smaller-than-life performance space on opening day, the cast do an admirable job at portraying giants of American politics with skill, panache and a healthy dose of irony. Standout performances are given by Josh Bruton as Al Gore, and Rebecca Harper as The Narrator (and Bush’s simultaneous wife and mother). Both have a commanding presence within the playing space, portraying convincing caricatures that are instantly recognisable.

The writing is done decently well, even with slight issues with pacing that make some elements feel rushed at several points. Largely lost within the ensuing chaotic approach, however, it doesn’t detract from overall enjoyment but is indicative of a need to tighten up the script a little to truly immerse and awe. Comedy is interwoven well and can garner a roar, especially when characters lean into their multi-rolling tendencies with such gems as “I breastfed you, I bore your children” – I’ll leave you to puzzle that one through for a second.

Further detracting from the immersion is the interesting approach taken to costume design, in that some characters (namely The Narrator and Nancy Pelosi) have costumes designed from head to toe, including using wigs, whilst other characters seemingly have a suit jacket and the American dream to go with. I’d have liked to see a bit more inventiveness & creativity, especially for Bush, given he plays a not-inconsequential role in *Bush! The Musical*.

A musical is made or broken on its soundtrack and the ability of the performers to execute it with style and skill, but we may have to wait for the Midterms for a verdict on this. Some songs, particularly ‘Just Blame Reagan’ and ‘At Least I Was President’, deliver themselves exceptionally well, whilst others fall to the wayside. You can never expect every musical theatre song to be a smash hit – just look at ‘Something Bad’ from *Wicked* – but I get the sense that brilliant songs are the exception, rather than the rule, here.

Regardless of costumes, questionable music or the impressive lengths this show tries to stretch itself to in just 50 minutes, *Bush! The Musical* is doubtlessly an enjoyable way to spend your lunchtime. The passion that has gone into this project is clear to see and

it's a surprisingly accessible piece of theatre for a Brit who wasn't even alive when Bush took power. You will certainly have a good time in Greenside's Lime Studio with this show, and at the end of the day: "Being the President is a hard job, and all that matters is you did your best". Commendable and enjoyable, don't miss *Bush! The Musical*.