The Powerpop Girls: A New Diva Religion

★★★

Sophie Layton (she/her)

Millie proclaimed that the audience was "looking at [them] confused & slightly entertained". They read the room well.

We've all got to believe in something, whether it's a higher power, the meaning of life or the existence of the Loch Ness Monster, but *The Powerpop Girls: A New Diva Religion*'s interpretation of that is one that hasn't drawn me to convert, despite the temptation. The elevation of our favourite pop princesses to deity status, & the unwitting combination of three of these into a new, single 'diva' religion may be a queer dream, including of my own, but this interpretation doesn't quite hit the mark.

Relying on chaos, friendship, & the last minute 'plot armour principle' (a pet peeve of mine) in the form of an 'ancient miracle clause', the storyline of this show is weak at best, undermining its efficacy & potential. The whimsical approach to storytelling, with unnecessary expository worldbuilding in some places & a distinct lack of it in others gives audiences the sense that the narrative is being made up as it goes along, losing us in the long grass of nightclubs, cardboard computers & Olympic B-Team gymnastics. Combined with occasional over-acting & an inexplicable transformation into monkeys at one point, any semblance of narrative structure is lost remarkably quickly.

The casting is perhaps the show's strongest feature, with Indrid Heron's Zee being the guiding star of this religious crusade. An unapologetically camp character with undeniable stage presence & a comedic timing to rival the heavyweights of the comedy scene, Zee's interactions with Jessica Donaldson's Millie & James Cumming's Mr X gives this production a new lease of life, with each character bouncing off the others with effortless energy.

This production should also take greater pride in its technical & backstage elements, most notably relating to costume & lighting design, both punching well above their weight in communicative ability. The costume design is no less than exquisite, adorning our performers in eye-catching numbers with a not-so-subtle hint to their trademarked namesakes, but pieces that wouldn't find themselves out of place in any self-respecting queer scene. Complemented & accentuated by lighting design that enhanced this, the performers, & was able to effectively demonstrate nightclubs, offices & everything in between, Technical Manager Jessie Martin & Lighting Designer Jack Read have much to be recognised for & proud of.

The Powerpop Girls: A New Diva Religion has everything you could possibly hope for in an unapologetically-queer Edinburgh Fringe production, but sadly, fails to weave these elements together into a cohesive narrative that is able to sufficiently execute its bold ideas to the extent that is required for a storyline this abstract. Whilst the acting, costume & imagination behind it cannot be overstated, it lacks the definition & clarity to elevate it to the truly highest levels of Fringe notoriety.

It is always unfortunate when a show is able to summarise itself so succinctly, but “where was the clarity?” appears to be the most applicable feeling that this tale has ended upon.