

Sharon Playhouse, Sharon, CT

Rock of Ages, Book by Chris D'Arienzo. Music by Styx, Journey, Bon Jovi, Pat Benatar, Twisted Sister. Steve Perry, Poison & More, arranged by Ethan Popp.

Directed by Hunter Foster.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“...cleft for me.”

You have to like the second level pop music of 1987 to truly enjoy this show. To be honest and up-front about it, I don't. The show's book, by Chris D'Arienzo, is cookie-cutter regular with ignorable and forgettable dialogue. It's purpose is to provide cues for the many songs inserted into it. The songs, with few exceptions, are the least memorable from the period. The “show” is a showcase for talented performers who can stand out and away from the material they are asked to perform. There is some justification for this as many of the Sharon Playhouse's cast are remarkable singers.



The cast of Rock of Ages; Photo: Alysis Morrissey

Set in a rock club on the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles that is due to be demolished by a German company, the story of a furtive romance between a would-be rocker and a young girl from the mid-west plays out predictably, with no surprises. **Jordan Bollwerk** plays Drew whose identity is constantly in question, whose name changes with each band he joins in his quest for stardom. Bollwerk, the actor, is better than the role, a decent actor and singer whose microphone failed in the first act. This didn't halt his performance and he continued on as though nothing was wrong.

Coulby Jenkins as Franz was very good indeed and **Dick Terhune** as his father presented the comic threat in the show. Both men were excellent in their roles.



Jordan Friend; Photo: Alysis Morrissey

Jordan Friend as Lonny, a musician and the story's host and narrator, is a delight to watch and listen to in this show. His off-hand relationship with the audience is the making of the piece, getting and keeping us involved, or at least as involved as we could be. It is his work, and the work of director Hunter Foster, that makes this show interesting and involving at all.

Small roles are well-played by the earnest company which helps the time go by, though the constant blare of non-melodic musical noise often drowns out the spoken word. There is a good reason why most of this music did not capture me in its time and that is repeated here in this show. It provides sound as opposed to content, It is mind-blowing context rather than mind-blowing commentary on its time.

Giuliana Augello plays Sherrie, the aspiring singer who goes through emotional shifts left and right as she attempts to discover the road to performance possibilities and the equally rocky road to romance. She is a definite talent and very welcome in this show. She never truly gets the opportunity to display her abilities, however, which is a distinct mistake in the writing, not the direction.

Technically the show is a very good one. Sets, costumes, lights and sound all are fine. The show is entertaining; it's just not a good show.

+ 06/29/2024 +

Rock of Ages plays at the Sharon Playhouse, in Sharon, Connecticut through July 7. For information and tickets go to www.sharolplayhouse.org.



Giuliana Augello; Photo: Alysis Morrissey