

Mac-Haydn Theatre, Chatham, NY

All Shook Up. Book by Joe DiPietro. Featuring the songs of Elvis Presley.

Directed by David Alpert, Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“It’s Now or Never”

When they told me I had to see the Elvis Presley musical I thought. “Why, oh God, why?” Well I saw it and now I know why: it’s a juke box show made up of Presley songs and loosely based on William Shakespeare’s play “Twelfth Night” and it is fun, genuine fun, real fun. It’s a show I am glad to have seen and to be able recommend to you because it is fun.



Spencer Stanley (C) and the cast; Photo: Ann Kielbas

Chad arrives on his motorcycle like a veritable Marlon Brando and captures the imaginations of townsfolk almost universally. Sadly, the Mayor of this town has made it illegal to feel emotional urges and explore them. Sexual fun is banned. Dancing and singing are bringing up the rear. But a few people can’t help themselves. They need what they need and Chad thinks they should explore those needs. His bike needs work and he hires grease-monkey Natalie Halley to do what’s needed. Naturally, she falls head over heels for him. But he can’t see a romance with her. In pure Will S. fashion she disguises herself as a man named Ed and becomes Chad’s bestie. Chad is played by the devilishly handsome Spencer Stanley and Natalie, under the overalls and grease, is played by sweet Cydney Gleckner who is already loved by Dennis, played expertly by Jacob Atkins.



Cydney Gleckner, Jacob Atkins;
Photo: Ann Kielbasa



Gabe Belyeu; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

Never” and “Fools Fall in Love.” Until he realizes how Natalie makes him feel he flirts with the local museum director, Miss Sandra, beautifully portrayed by Rachel Pantazis. Ashley D. Kelley also scores with her rendition of “That’s All Right.”

The songs from the Presley canon work wonderfully in this peculiar play, literally shaking up the story and rattling the characters. It is all obvious under the fine direction of David Alpert and the expert choreography of Andrew Turteltaub.

Scenically this seemed to be a slightly simpler show for the Mac-Haydn with good work done by designer Alivia Cross and easier costumes by Daniel Hewson, but it was a powerful light show designed by Andrew Gmoser, certainly one of his finest.

Elvis fans should rejoice to hear so many of his songs conscripted and placed in such a fun show. There are twenty-five in all, none of them sounding like they were stolen from the Elvis performance canon, with the possible exception of the opening number, “Love Me Tender.” Among my personal favorites were “Blue Suede Shoes,” “A Little Less Conversation,” and the finale, “Burning Love.”

Her father, Jim Haller, in love with a black woman, also a forbidden love, is played by Gabe Belyeu. It is good to have him back on stage at the Mac for he always brings a touch of class tempered with talent to the proceedings. He is great in this role. He and “Chad” sing the Presley anthem, “Don’t Be Cruel” in the first act and in the second act they serenade us with “The Power of My Love.”

Dennis, in the meantime, having lost Natalie to her disguise as Ed, falls in love with another black woman, Lorraine, who naturally belts out “It’s Now or



CeCe Morin; Photo: Ann Kielbasa



Spencer Stanley; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

518-392-9292.

This is an unusual show, utilizing this music to collaborate with Shakespeare's dramatic concept. That it works so very well is wonderful and it is still a surprise. If I am so glad I saw the show I suspect you will feel the same when you see it, and I urge you to hasten to The Mac-Haydn in Chatham, New York.

+ 08/02/2024 +

All shook Up runs at the Mac-Haydn Theater,. 1925 State Route 203, Chatham, NY through August 11/ For information and tickets go to machaydntheatre.org or call