



Bonnie & Clyde – a new musical

Review

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Those who follow my reviews know how much I love Frank Wildhorn’s musical “Bonnie & Clyde”. I loved it on Broadway, and I love it in its current incarnation at Peppermint Creek Theatre Company in Lansing.

The story, told in flashback beginning with the deaths of Bonnie & Clyde, shows the couple’s meeting, relationship, Clyde’s multiple arrests, and crime spree in late 20’s early 30’s deep south and Texas that eventually draws in his brother and his wife as well. Using a country pop rock score, and with plenty of laughs along the way, Wildhorn, Don Black, and Ivan Menchell assure that the show focuses on the lead players throughout and while not necessarily generating sympathy for them at least allows you to empathize deeply with that desire to escape your desolate surroundings and live the rich-man’s dream.

Adam Woolsey (as Clyde) and Brittany Nichol (Bonnie) are pitch perfect in their demanding vocal and acting roles, and Matt Bill and Mary Maurer lend superb support as Clyde’s brother Buck and his sister-in-law Blanche. A fine performance is also turned in by Scott Laban (Ted), love-stricken deputy watching Bonnie slip away from his protection and toward the criminal Clyde. Their vocal finesse makes Wildhorn’s best musical theater score soar.

Katie Doyle’s direction moves the show along at a fast clip and she makes excellent use of the clever and versatile set space, designed by Jeff Boerger. The excellent ensemble play multiple roles, while Brent Decker’s 7-piece orchestra never misses a beat. His vocal direction is crisp and polished. The sound design by Brian Ugorowski is very good.

While not a family-friendly show, parents will be glad to hear that the production is less nudity and gunplay oriented than the original Broadway production, but in the final sequence when the four leads are surrounded by the local deputies and authorities the menace is lessened and the “big shootout” never occurs — an instance where offstage action doesn’t fill in enough to substitute for the shortened action sequence on stage. The production is also lacking an important bathtub set piece.

None the less, those are minor quibbles and this is a terrific production that you should see if you can. I kid you not when I say that this production is very very good.

When I saw the original Broadway production, I knew that the show had posted a closing notice for the following Sunday. At intermission, the stunned audience reaction revolved around one general consensus: how could this terrific new Broadway musical be closing so quickly? Come see for yourself what makes this new musical stand out from the crowd. You will be glad you spent a few hours with Bonnie & Clyde & Buck & Blanche. And you will probably find yourself heading to iTunes to buy the original cast album. It belongs in every collection.

Bonnie & Clyde continues through next weekend and tickets are available at peppermintcreek.org