

Review: Footloose: The Musical ****



There has recently been something of an 80s revival in cultural matters with acts such as Rick Astley, Adam Ant and ABC being part of the Rewind Festival which visits Scotland in July. If you recall that decade with more than a passing fondness and can't wait until the summer for your 80s 'fix' then you should try to get along to Edinburgh's Festival Theatre this week for *Footloose: The Musical*.

Based on the 1984 film in which American actor Kevin Bacon made his name, *Footloose: The Musical* is the story of Ren McCormack (played by Luke Baker) who loves dancing in the big city of Chicago but has to move to small town Bomont where dancing is banned following a tragic accident. However, new kid in town Ren is out to defy orders from the town's Rev Shaw Moore, played by Nigel Lister and soon has the rest of the town following his lead. His actions impress the Rev Shaw's daughter Ariel, superbly played by Hannah Price.

The show is an effervescent collage of energy, high spirits, impressive dance moves and music which will take you back more than three decades. The second half of the show is quite moving in parts and a testament to the skills of the performers. Although the ending is as cheesy as a slice of gorgonzola, for those who have seen the film they will know what to expect.

Those who do remember the 1980s will doubtless recall songs such as *Let's Hear It For The Boy*, *Holdin' Out For A Hero*, *Almost Paradise*, *Mama Says* as well as the title song.

Luke Baker – whose recent credits include *American Idiot*, *Sunny Afternoon* and *Hairspray* – gives a fine performance but

it's the performance of Willard, played by Pop Idol runner-up Gareth Gates, which is the highlight of an impressive show. Gates has enjoyed a successful stage career since those Pop Idol days with hit shows such as *Les Misérables*, *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* and *Legally Blonde* to his name. He plays the part of the loveable but naive Willard brilliantly.

Also in the impressive cast are Maureen Nolan, a veteran of stage musicals and someone who can count Frank Sinatra among the many stars she has worked with and Matthew Tomlinson.

I have to admit I had thought about cancelling my visit to the show as the Hibs-Hearts Scottish Cup replay was in my thoughts. However, when I couldn't get a ticket for the game at Easter Road, I reverted to Plan A and headed for a musical treat. And given the way events transpired at the football, I'm glad I did!

If you want good old-fashioned entertainment and enjoy a blast from the past, head along to Edinburgh's Festival Theatre for a thoroughly entertaining evening.

With music by Tom Snow and lyrics by Dean Pitchford, *Footloose: The Musical* is adapted for the stage by Dean Pitchford and Walter Bobbie and is produced by David Hutchinson, Phillip Rowntree, Jason Haigh-Ellery, Stephen McGill and Runaway Entertainment. It runs at The Edinburgh Festival Theatre until Saturday 20 February 2016. [Click here](#) for ticket information

Edinburgh Reporter Review: ****