

Review: A Story of Tom Jones. The Musical ***



In the late 1960s and early 1970s, my mother sought an escape from the travails of bringing up her young son on her own by switching on the Dansette record player and putting on the long-playing records (ask your parents, young 'uns) of artists such as Engelbert Humperdink and Tom Jones. I grew up with the hit songs of these two crooners so when I heard that Tom Jones – The Musical was coming to Edinburgh's Festival Theatre then I jumped at the chance to go and see it.

Now, to be clear, the show doesn't actually feature Tom Jones himself but it does feature some of the great man's early songs as the story of one the greatest singers Wales has produced is told. Starting out as Tommy Scott with his band The Senators, the lads wowed the dance halls and working men's clubs in South Wales. They then had a fall-out with their London based producer Joe Meek before another London impresario, Gordon Mills, took them under his wing.

Eventually, a record deal with Decca was signed and...well, you know the rest. The show was decent entertainment although I felt the first half was rather overly-focused on Tom's relationship with his childhood sweetheart Linda Trenchard (splendidly played by Elin Phillips) and the fact they were expectant parents at just 16 years of age. At times it seemed easy to forget this was a musical.

After a short break, the second half featured more music with early numbers such as *Ghost Riders in the Sky*, *Spanish Harlem* and *Lucille*. Tom and the lads pitch up in a dingy London flat courtesy of Gordon Mills and the story is then of the struggle to make it big.

Tom Jones – The Musical is enjoyable enough although the quandary was obvious to this observer. By its definition, the show clearly attracts devotees of the great man. As such, they will already be well-versed in his early career and his struggle to make it to the big time. What fans may have wished for was more of the big songs which made his name. The story ended with *Delilah* although the excellent Kit Orton, who did a fabulous job performing as Jones, treated the fans to a few post *Delilah* songs for which the Welsh wonder is renowned.

A decent evening's entertainment although if you're expecting a compilation of Tom Jones' greatest hits you may be disappointed.

Tom Jones The Musical is at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre until Saturday 19 March. Ticket information here

<http://www.edtheatres.com/tom>

Edinburgh Reporter Review: ***