

Review: Cilla the Musical



I should admit here that I was never a huge fan of Cilla Black. She had a powerful voice back in the 1960s but the loveable Scouser persona began to grow rather tiresome as her singing career began to give way to her television presenting career in the 1980s and 1990s (Blind Date and Surprise Surprise were tv shows I avoided like the plague)

However, *Cilla the Musical* tells the story of how Cilla White, the young office girl who could sing a note or two became Cilla Black, one of Britain's biggest light entertainers.


This spectacular and heart-warming musical adaptation of the critically acclaimed ITV mini-series has been written by BAFTA award winner, Jeff Pope and stars Kara Lily Hayworth as Cilla. Hayworth beat thousands of hopefuls in nationwide open auditions for the coveted role.

Hayworth produces a quite brilliant performance. When she sang *Anyone Who Had a Heart* just before the interval I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand up, such was the power of her rendition.

Playing her lover and eventual husband Bobby Willis is Carl Au, perhaps most famous for his role as Barry in the BBC series *Waterloo Road*. Au also produces an impressive performance and the story is as much about Cilla's on-off relationship with Bobby as it is about her road to stardom.

Playing Cilla's manager Brian Epstein – who also managed The Beatles and who was introduced to the young Cilla by the Fab Four – is Andrew Lancel. Best known for playing Detective Inspector Neil Manson in ITV's *The Bill* and Frank Foster in

Coronation Street, Lancel gives a passionate performance as the troubled Epstein.

It's the introduction by a young John Lennon – played by Michael Hawkins – to Epstein that changes Priscilla White's life forever. By the age of just 25 she would be known as singer and TV Star Cilla Black, Number One selling artist and at the fore-front of the Brit-Pop music scene. The musical score is the ultimate soundtrack to the 60's including Cilla's greatest hits. As well as *Anyone Who Had a Heart*, the audience is treated to *Alfie*, *Step Inside Love* and *Something Tells Me; Twist and Shout* by the Beatles; *California Dreamin* by The Mamas and The Papas' and many more. 

Produced by Bill Kenwright and Laurie Mansfield, alongside Executive Producer and Cilla's son, Robert Willis, *Cilla the Musical* is quite simply a superb show. Kara Lily Hayworth gives the performance of her life and even the comic timing is of the highest standard ('I've been practising me vowels' she tells a bemused Brian Epstein)

Those who weren't particularly fans of Cilla Black – me included – will find it hugely enjoyable and quite emotional in parts (when you hear her and Bobby sing *You've Lost that Loving Feeling* you'll know what I mean) However, if you loved Cilla then you simply must go to this outstanding musical.

Cilla the Musical is on at the Edinburgh Playhouse until Saturday 23rd September. Tickets [here](#)

Edinburgh Reporter rating – ***** five stars all the way!