

REVIEW: Forever Plaid a well-tuned show

Brampton Guardian

They aren't your typical zombies— after all, their names are Frankie, Sparky, Smudge and Jinx and they wear matching plaid cummerbunds. A bunch of gruesome corpses, they are not.

But for four guys who have risen from the dead, they really know how to breathe the life back into a concert that never was.

This is the premise for the 1990 off-Broadway musical revue,

Forever Plaid

, which plays as the second installment in the Rose Theatre's Summer Theatre Series on the main stage until July 28.

Written by Stuart Ross, the show is a 1950s-era musical revue performed by a quartet of high school pals who were killed in a car crash before ever recording an album or playing the concert they'd always dreamed of.

The show opens with the four friends— The Plaids— returning from the afterlife for a final chance to perform the concert that never was in the hopes that they'll be able to "move on".

The guys take turns harmonizing— in 1950s boy band fashion— and reminiscing about their dreams of making it big.

It's a simple story— there's not much more to it than that— so the production relies heavily on the music, the talent of the cast and the creative vision of the director. On these accounts, it does not disappoint.

Forever Plaid features a cast stocked with Rose Theatre favourites who have performed the show before— Sweeney MacArthur (Smudge), Jon-Alex MacFarlane (Jinx), Rob Torr (Sparky) and Kraig Waye (Frankie)— so it's easy to fall for the characters. Even if you've seen these talented actors perform in other shows, you'll be surprised by what they can do with the role of a never-loved, barely-lived, newly-revived young singer.

Their renditions of familiar tunes have just enough originality to not be boring, but don't stray far enough to feel unfamiliar. They move through a variety of songs such as

Scotland the Brave

,
Heart and Soul

,
Three Coins in the Fountain

and

Rags to Riches

with accompaniment by a three-piece band.

Particularly and pleasantly surprising was MacArthur's incredibly rich baritone performance of

Sixteen Tons

The music is terrific— the solos, harmonies and variety of clever tributes to an era bygone certainly keeps your interest. But it is a little slow to pick up from the start— and just when you get going, it slows down again. But perhaps that's reflective of the era it pays homage to— a time when life wasn't so hurried.

In addition to it being a musical revue,

Forever Plaid

also features a handful of witty vignettes— including a particularly entertaining one about the Ed Sullivan show that is masterfully executed. When the comedy gets going, it's good. The four guys, directed by Rob Woodcock, do a terrific job playing off each others cues, and their comedic timing is impeccable, which forces a laugh even if some of the humour is a little "shticky". The play also has the cast engaging with the audience— they've covered everything from offering (not-so) subtle winks to the crowd to bringing up one audience member to help play

Heart and Soul

on the piano.

Forever Plaid



Forever Plaid is a well-tuned production that will appeal to those who want a show with harmony, comedy and a little heart. It runs until July 28 at the Rose Theatre. Tickets start at \$32 and can be purchased by calling 905-874-2800 or visiting www.rosetheatre.ca.



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