

“We Will Rock You”

By Queen and Ben Elton

At the Hippodrome Theatre through October 20

By Princess Appau

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

When one walks into the Hippodrome Theatre to view “We Will Rock You,” the common expectation is a compilation of classic rock and roll music held together by a simple plot. This jukebox musical, however, surpasses those expectations by entwining a powerful plot with clever updating of the original 2002 musical by Queen and Ben Elton.

The playwright Elton has surrounded Queen’s songs with a plot that highlights the familiar conflict of our era: youths being sycophants to technology. This comic method is not only the key to the show’s success but also the antidote to any fear that the future could become this. The futuristic storyline is connected to many of Queen’s lyrics that foreshadow the youthful infatuation with technology and the monotonous lifestyle that results. This approach is emphasized by the use of a projector displaying programmed visuals of a futuristic setting throughout the show.

The opening scene transitions into the Queen song “Radio Gaga,” which further affirms this theme. The scene includes a large projection of hundreds of youth, clones to the cast performing on stage. The human cast and virtual cast are clothed alike in identical white tops and shorts or skirts; they sing and dance in sublime unison, defining the setting of the show and foreshadowing the plot.

Unlike most jukebox musicals the plot is not a biographical story of the performers whose music is featured. “We Will Rock You” is set 300 years in the future on the iPlanet when individuality and creativity are shunned and conformity reigns. Galileo (Brian Crum) and Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis) are two teens who do not conform; instead they desire originality and identity which are illegal. Branded as Bohemians, they journey to find answers about the legends of the dead rock and roll and the truth behind Galileo’s strange thoughts that are actually echoes of lyrics to songs from the 20th century.

Meanwhile, Killer Queen (Jacqueline B. Arnold), the chief executive officer of GlobalSoft, and her assistant Khashoggi (P.J. Griffith) endeavor to thwart and destroy the Bohemians throughout their journey. The Bohemians are those who have escaped the watch and imprisonment of GlobalSoft and struggle to understand the lost language of rock and roll left behind on tattered posters.

The show begins shakily. The opening musical performance of “Radio Gaga” and the explanation of the sci-fi futuristic setting are sabotaged by the overly powerful lights and the jittery vocals. The programmed background imagery of hundreds of identical people marching shown through the large overhead screen doesn’t make up for the lack of

physical props which include little more than a simple set of white stairs. The ensuing sexual innuendo is very blunt and therefore makes the play inappropriate for a younger crowd.

A more effective scene is the recreation of the Hard Rock Cafe, a safe haven to the Bohemians and a museum of the ancient world. It includes a hodge-podge collage of rock images, iconic magazines, an old black-and-white television and a bright-pink Harley. On the left side is a large gold statue of Freddie Mercury.

The show begins to engage the audience by using lyrics not only in the songs but also in the actual script. The phrase "Somebody to Love" is spoken in the dialogue before it is ever sung. This helps the songs more easily blend with the script. The live band located above the stage throughout the play helps convey the sound and feel of a rock concert.

Treating the common things today as foreign history adds a sense of humor to the script. A magazine which can be found almost anywhere today is described in the musical as "internet you can touch." Katy Perry, a famous female pop star of our time, is cast as a male who plays a homemade bass. Most jukebox musicals wouldn't engage the use of current famous musicians or include acknowledgement of their songs. The decision to do so reduces an underlying feeling of estrangement from a distant time making the audience more comfortable and more willing to laugh.

The contrast in character between Galileo (Brian Crum) and Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis) allowed for conflict and different viewpoints throughout the play. Galileo is more gullible and adventurous in comparison to Scaramouche who is more paranoid and reclusive. Their characters disagree very often, because Galileo is ready to jump into the Bohemian world and search for the meaning of the legends while Scaramouche is skeptical of the Bohemians because she lacks belief in the legends of rock and roll.

The budding relationship isn't as obvious as in most musicals. The romance develops so awkwardly through musical pieces and comic scenes that most viewers won't recognize the connection until later. On the other hand, the leads' early meeting and early conflict sets up the coupling quite effectively.

The humor is crucial to the entertainment. The Bohemians are named after popular celebrities, including a quite manly character named Brittany Spears. This showed the absolute disconnect between the old and new. For example, what the Bohemians called a "vai daeo ta pi" is actually video tape that they don't realize can be inserted into the VCR.

The script incorporates modern-day celebrity drama even though such news changes constantly. The challenge of constantly memorizing new additions to the script and excluding old ones while at the same time maintaining an operatic approach is a twist to its original rock concept which works beautifully. The solo song "No One but You," sung by Oz with backing of the Bohemians, given an operatic arrangement of long high notes, crescendos, slurs and a solo decrescendo.

Overall the jukebox musical “We Will Rock You” is a success. It manages to hold on to the rock and roll while incorporating theatrical aspects and honoring the good who died young. And in the very end after the long journey is over gives the audience the cliché but enjoyable concert with the great hit “Bohemian Rhapsody.” This play is worth the revision from the original.

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By Aria Eghbal

THEY WILL ROCK YOU

The audience’s attention is caught from the moment the curtains, emblazoned with a multicolored Queen logo, open. The house falls silent and the music starts just as a Star Wars-esque image of twinkling stasis is projected onto the backdrop. At first, these two contrasting images don’t seem important, but as the show goes on, the parallels between science fiction and rock and roll become clearer.

“We Will Rock You” attempts something quite difficult by combining the rock period in the 1970s with things that have not yet come to pass in the 24th century, yet this unlikely anachronism of a show somehow works out. By drawing from both rock and roll and science fiction the musical provides an exciting contrast not usually seen in the average jukebox musical.

Ben Elton, the show’s playwright and director, has artfully placed multiple pop-culture jokes from this era of our history throughout the musical, which supports the rock culture theme, while the plot lends itself to a technologically advanced future that could be very possible. The production designer (Mark Fisher) also does a great job of mixing the two worlds of rock and sci-fi, designing some scenes as a “Hard Rock Café” of this new, oppressive future and others as a high-tech office for the Killer Queen.

Interestingly enough, the scenes with the more futuristic sets are usually the ones with the executives and Killer Queen, while the grittier and more rock and roll scenes are the ones with the Bohemian rebels. Throughout the musical, the balance of futurism and hard rock and roll is carefully maintained by constantly reminding the audience of the time through referencing pop culture of the late 20th and early 21st centuries like Britney Spears, Ozzy Osborne and Whitney Houston, but humorously confusing what those references represent.

For example, in scene four when Scaramouche and Galileo, the musical’s main characters, are taken to the hospital to be monitored by the pseudo government, they sing

“Under Pressure.” If that scene were the only one the audience had seen, it would have sounded like typical teenagers speaking of societal pressures. But in context, it’s easy to say they are speaking of their oppressive government along with the normal pressures felt by most teenagers, though it’s far into the future.

“We Will Rock You” starts strong, following the lead characters Galileo Figaro (Brian Justin Crum) and Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis). They quickly become best friends on the iPlanet 300 years into the future, when a corporation called GlobalSoft is in charge. Nearly everything is virtual on the iPlanet: the government, the graduating teenagers and, most significantly, the music.

The corporation's leader is the Killer Queen (Jacqueline B. Arnold), who orders her assistants –“executives”-- around in order to achieve her ends. Traipsing around in a long coat and dress with dramatic makeup and boots, Arnold’s powerhouse voice is the best thing about her character, though her storyline isn’t too believable.

She isn’t given a clear purpose other than to uphold the values of GlobalSoft, which include bringing the Bohemian rebels down, and which causes her character to be rather one-dimensional and flat. The Bohemians, on the other hand, have a clear goal: to restore rock to its rightful place in society and to take down GlobalSoft.

“We Will Rock You” is a great example of a jukebox musical, carefully mixing aspects of the band Queen and likely plot situations. For example, at one point, the Killer Queen (Arnold) answers a completely non-sexual question posed by her assistant, Khashoggi (Griffith), with “I like it both ways,” to which Khashoggi responds: “So I’ve heard.” The audience’s response to this response is an outbreak of giggles.

In the context of the scene, this feels like a shout-out to Freddie Mercury, Queen’s former lead singer, because he was rumored to be bisexual. There are other references to Mercury scattered through this performance which were surely nice for longtime Queen fans, who no doubt were feeling nostalgic from the songs and rebellious nature of the Bohemians.

The beauty of this musical is that even if you aren’t familiar with the many forms of rock music, or even the various musical artists mentioned in this musical, you can still understand it well. A few jokes would have benefitted from an understanding of rock history, but many pop references are easily accessible to the average music fan.

If you were planning on seeing this musical and weren’t familiar with the music of Queen, it would be helpful to listen to some of their more popular songs, such as “We Are The Champions” or “Radio GaGa,” since they are featured and cause fans in the audience to sing along energetically. However, this musical definitely won’t bore experienced Queen fans. Even though it is principally a Queen musical, the futuristic part of the plot allows a non-Queen fan to understand and be entertained by this show just as much.

While some may argue that this musical starts off a little too strong, what with a light show resembling a rock concert and music blaring so loud at times that it is almost impossible to understand the lyrics, these problems are mostly in the first act and are strategically placed to excite the audience. However, these instances of near-blinding lights, while brief, may not be suitable for young audiences or those with eye problems.

Not only could the lights feel inappropriate to someone not used to rock concerts, but the humor sprinkled throughout this musical may feel slightly crude at times, though balanced with topical and situational humor as well. For example, in one scene, Galileo and Scaramouche find themselves in a “Hard Rock Café” resembling a beaten-down garage. When one of these Bohemians questions the other, “Who are you? Miley Cyrus?” we are treated to 30 very funny seconds of twerking.

Filled with tons of jokes and iconic concert-like music performed by an amazing live band which floats at the top edge of the proscenium, this jukebox musical presents one possible future for the interplay between music and society. Not only is music today being uploaded and downloaded from the internet illegally, but much of what is being produced is what Galileo calls “Computerized Recorded Auto-tuned Pop: C.R.A.P.”

Often science fiction has a way of predicting the future, like Elton’s modified “Radio GaGa,” which says, “No need to think, no need to feel/When only cyberspace is real,” which is what many teenagers currently believe, because of the technological inclination of our society. These lyrics were written only in the early 2000s, when the internet was seriously kicking off, so Elton somehow foresaw the future of technology that was just around the corner.

This glimpse into a possible totalitarian future may worry some, but it feels like it’s only there to entertain at first, not to harm. However, as the musical goes on, the implications are obvious: it’s Globalsoft’s way or the highway, which doesn’t seem a likely prospect of our near future, but could happen in the distant future.

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By Charlie Fern

NIGHT AT THE OPERA OR DAY AT THE RACES?

The recent trend of the jukebox musical has been criticized as often as it has been praised. “We Will Rock You,” a hit on London’s West End for over a decade and now installed at the Hippodrome Theatre, is one of the most commercially successful. Two questions need to be answered. First, is the success of “We Will Rock You” a testament

to its quality? Second, is this show an appropriate representation of Queen and musical theater?

The answer to the first question is yes. While the story is silly, the show is incredibly enjoyable, and who said that all shows have to have thought-provoking story lines? The music is great, and so are all the performers. The show also has many laugh-out-loud moments, making the show succeed in what its main focus is: entertainment.

The answer to the second question is yes and no. The interpretations of each song would definitely make the band and its fans glad. On the other hand, the show is a lot flashier than other musicals, some of the theatrical emphasis on character development is lost. But it does have a story to go with the songs, even if it's not a very challenging story.

When the leads, two teenage runaways named Galileo and Scaramouche, arrive at the Hard Rock Café, the rebel Bohemians ask Scaramouche if she is Miley Cyrus, followed by a twerking session. Several of the Bohemians turn around and shake what their mothers gave them while parodying the singer's recent antics. Is this deep material? Absolutely not. Is it funny? Yes, it is. This may not be what you see in more traditional musicals, but sometimes change is needed to keep things interesting for audiences, who may well be sick of tradition.

"We Will Rock You" tells the story of Galileo Figaro (Brian Justin Crum), a social outcast who hears noises in his head, which are actually lyrics to songs. These songs have been forgotten in time, as Earth is now the iPlanet, ruled by GlobalSoft Corporation. Galileo soon meets a girl at the hospital, Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis), who is also a social reject.

The two become lovers who leave their homes and travel to meet Brit (Jared Zirilli) and Oz (Erica Peck), Bohemians who want to make music using actual instruments. Before they can achieve that goal, however, they will need to overthrow the Killer Queen (Jacqueline B. Arnold), the leader of GlobalSoft.

Brit and Oz then take Galileo and Scaramouche to the Hard Rock Café in Las Vegas, where we meet the rest of the Bohemians, all named after famous musical artists such as Ozzy Osbourne and Buddy Holly. The Bohemians tag on with Scaramouche and Galileo to bring rock music back so people don't have to keep listening to what they refer to as computer pop.

The show's cast brings obvious talent, eye-catching choreography, and great energy to classic Queen songs. The best example of this is during "No One but You," where the breathtaking harmonies of all the Bohemians make the audience feel genuine sadness at the deaths of so many music stars.

The strongest character is Killer Queen, an excellent and hilarious villain. Her firing of her assistant Khashoggi, followed by her rendition of "Another One Bites the Dust," is

pure comic gold. The Queen forcibly scolds and removes him off the stage in a fabulous display of campiness, heightened by her musical celebration in a hot-pink jumpsuit.

All the characters were entertaining, however, with each one having memorable lines that made the audience erupt in hysterics. A great example is when Britney Spears is referred to as “one of the greatest rock stars of all time.” Not all the characters are the most well-defined, but they’re not meant to be taken all that seriously. For instance, it’s not fully explained how Galileo is an outcast.

While the story may seem ridiculous to many, it is cohesive, and provides many very funny references to popular music ranging from Elvis to Lady Gaga. Another notable aspect of the script is that it appears to be updated often, as there were references to artists such as Miley Cyrus and Katy Perry, who weren’t known to the public when this show first premiered in 2002. These references make the show more accessible to younger generations who aren’t very familiar with Queen’s music outside of a select few songs.

The biggest complication with the show is the technical elements. A video is effective at certain points during the show but distracting at others. The video effects make the show feel like a modern-day pop concert, which contradicts the script’s criticism of computer pop. Though they make fun of her quite a bit, the video effects would fit in perfectly at any Britney Spears concert. While Queen was big on visuals, the screen doesn’t make it feel like the audience is at a play.

Also, Queen was spectacular during a time when there wasn’t as much technology, so the tech somewhat takes away from the spirit of the band. The flashing lights during the song “A Kind of Magic” are cool in moderation, but they lasted the entire song, making it hard to watch the number. The actual sets were more effective than the video screens as far as capturing a scene’s atmosphere. For instance, the backdrop during the Hard Rock Café scene was very well-done, and it captured the raw atmosphere of the Bohemians’ lifestyle better than any video screen ever could.

Though there’s too much tech and not enough story, “We Will Rock You” was an extremely entertaining production overall. It succeeded as a tribute to one of the greatest rock bands of all time. The audience appeared to be having the time of their lives at the production, howling at the funny lines and actors and jamming out to classics such as “We Are the Champions” and “We Will Rock You.”

On opening night, during the encore performance of “Bohemian Rhapsody,” the audience went insane as Queen guitarist Brian May came out to play the song’s famous guitar solo. This proves that the show is something the band is proud of. Despite its flaws, “We Will Rock You” succeeds as a fresh and fun musical. Who’s coming to this show expecting to see something with a message?

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By Sarah Fielder

QUEEN MUSICAL: SOME KIND OF MAGIC

When you think of Queen, you think of their legendary songs that seem impossible to duplicate. But the musical “We Will Rock You” does a superb job of executing their music and incorporating a plot that fits the meanings of their songs. The storyline reflects the rebellious attitude of Queen’s songs and the actors superbly execute their performances.

It is important for jukebox musicals to execute their prewritten songs successfully, but not to try and replicate them exactly as they were made. This jukebox musical succeeded because it did not try to imitate Queen’s performances exactly but instead used the songs’ meanings and ideas to base the musical around.

For example, during the song “Crazy Little Thing Called Love,” the performers dance a complex number flipping and spinning their partners. The set, a futuristic, run-down Hard Rock Café, is heavily covered in graffiti. Despite their surroundings, the actors dressed in exaggerated muscle tees, corsets and stretchy pants convey the characters’ happiness and enthusiasm of being with each other. This scene takes the idea of Queen’s song and executes it with a swing dance with the actors completely focused on each other.

The show begins with a new method: a screen with a written introduction to help the audience understand what is happening. In a futuristic world, the iPlanet, any signs of individuality, including rock'n'roll, are outlawed. Technology is so dominant that it is taboo to be “anti-social media.”

The people who rebel against this idea are the Bohemians, who all search for the “lost” music. All of the Bohemians are dressed in exaggerated ‘80s clothing with leg warmers and several have multi-color mohawks. The main character Galileo (Brian Justin Crum) is an outcast at the high school and is considered the dreamer, since he remembers song titles and lyrics in his dreams, which are presumed to be from songs of the past.

The first song of the show is “Radio GaGa,” rewritten specifically for the musical. While in retrospect one of the least interesting songs with boring vocal parts, the ensemble does a good job of executing the robotic dance moves with rigid movements as they shuffle across the stage. The choreography reflects today’s pop music with its technological beeps and redundant lyrics. By contrast, the other songs incorporated guitars, drums and other instruments and allowed for more enthusiasm from the performers in their dances.

It is during Crum’s first song, “I Want to Break Free,” that the show kicks into high gear. Although he is the only person on the stage for most of it, he is able to capture the

audience's attention with his amazingly broad singing range and his athletic running to every corner of the stage. Galileo's counterpart in the show, Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis), proves an equally talented singer. She first shows of the depth of her voice on "Somebody to Love" pulling off difficult melisma with great breath control.

Lewis also proves to be very humorous with her pessimistic and sarcastic attitude. Throughout the musical, she is the only character who consistently points out the negative, providing the comic relief. Her actions also reflect the idea of rebellion, since she refuses to think that everything is going to be "OK" like everyone else.

When everything is going "perfectly," she reminds everyone how everything could be destroyed in a minute. When Galileo forgets he's not perfect, she reminds him his thinking is not "abstract," but "absent." The plotline for her character is not the most original though; being alienated by all the other girls because she wears only black is not a new idea in any show.

The villain of the musical, the Killer Queen (Jacqueline B. Arnold), also has strong vocals. Though she is the CEO of GlobalSoft, the corporation that employs everyone and works to destroy individuality, her costumes are just as outrageous as the Bohemians. Wearing corsets, capes and hair that rises 10 inches above her head all prove to be typical in her day-to-day life.

Her cohort Khashoggi (P.J. Griffith) wore an entirely gray suit with no details, and his hair was flawlessly smoothed back, and provided talent with exaggerated arm movements and expressions that could be seen from any seat in the theater. He often stated the obvious, and then was frequently proven wrong, providing comic relief.

Throughout the show, puns from old song titles and lyrics results in tons of laughter from the audience. Since no one is given names, just IP addresses, the Bohemians use names from famous musical artists instead. Taken from the "ancient texts," or posters left in the ruins of the Hard Rock Café in Vegas, these adopted names include Buddy Holly and the Crickets, Madonna, and Ozzie Osborne.

This is even more hilarious because they sometimes adopt the moniker of an artist of the opposite gender. Two cast members who prove to be especially hilarious were Brit (Jared Zirilli) and Buddy (Ryan Knowles). Both of them Bohemians, Zirilli's ability to act oblivious and Knowles' inability to pronounce anything adds to the comedy of the show. For instance, throughout the first act, Zirilli would "show off" his manliness and perform exaggerate karate kicks and shops.

Despite the cast's enthusiastic execution of the choreography and songs for most of the performance, there are several problems with the atmosphere that the show tries to create with special effects. In some songs, including "Some Kind of Magic" and "I Want to Break Free," the strobe lights surrounding the stage blind the audience. Another problem was that throughout the show, and especially during the finale with "We Will Rock You"

and “We Are the Champions,” the volume of the music could result in deafness afterwards.

One of the most impressive aspects of this musical is that it is rewritten for every country it is performed in. For instance, the Bohemians are named after American rock legends, while if the show were in a different country they would be named after different famous musicians. This show is not aimed for kids, however, with raunchy dance moves in several numbers and inappropriate humor in several scenes.

“We Will Rock You” proves to be a well executed and well written show, aimed for the adults who love Queen. When the entire casts runs out, all of them in their outrageous costumes and executing synchronized dance moves for the final number “Bohemian Rhapsody,” it is hard not to fall in love with the show. And with a pair of sunglasses and ear-plugs, it will be easy to enjoy.

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By William Linker

SINKING IN THE SEVEN SEAS OF RHYE

A show that begins with a dazzling light show as extravagant as the opening of “We Will Rock You” sets a high-energy standard for the rest of the production. Unfortunately, the glitz and glamor of this initial strobe display deteriorates with each passing song. While the original Queen songs are passionately reproduced by the majority of the cast, that’s not enough to compensate for an underwhelming plot and actors stuck in one emotion for the entire show.

A play that embodies the spirit of Queen doesn’t have the opportunity to settle down; instead the show must go big or go home every second. That being said, “We Will Rock You” quickly loses its beginning energy, fading into a script that mimics a Jerry Seinfeld standup routine more than a rock anthology. This musical shouldn’t have to rely on banks of strobe lights to pump up the energy every 10 minutes when the performance can’t.

“We Will Rock You” follows Galileo Figaro (Brian Crum), an outcast of a future dystopian society, as he struggles to find the meaning of the scattered words in his head and perhaps to salvage humanity. Galileo and his fellow outcast, Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis), fight to restore rock and roll to a world controlled by the despicable corporation GlobalSoft. Backed by a group of rebels called the Bohemians but hunted by GlobalSoft police, the pair of outcasts weave their way through a plot that seems to build and build with new characters and but never fully resolve, leaving everyone saying, “That’s it?”

When a musical is centered on a single rock band, it often mutates into a concert without a mosh pit. “We Will Rock You” is stuffed with characters, rising action and song puns—and not much else. But who needs a main character with personality or a satisfying conclusion? With every step Galileo takes through his journey, the play introduces a new, unresolved aspect to the show. Whether GlobalSoft’s brainwash technology or Scaramouche’s electrical skills, the show introduces concepts and then abandons them, creating enough open books to fill the Enoch Pratt Library.

The character development is lacking in some of the most crucial places. The villainous GlobalSoft CEO Killer Queen is said to be half-program, half-human—a concept never mentioned again after 15 minutes into the show. Likewise, the only Bohemian with a developed personality is quickly disposed of. When the only detailed characters are the leads Galileo and Scaramouche, the show ends up feeling hollow.

To analyze the leads of “We Will Rock You” is as easy as getting a migraine from the banks of strobe lights lining the sides of the stage. Crum does the best one can do for a character with little more motivation than voices in his head. He puts deep fervor into every song, often making up for his counterpart, Scaramouche. Ruby Lewis begins the show with a sense of teenage angst and sarcasm. This works well for the first scene or two, but as she stretches the emotion on through the entirety of the show, it grows monotonous and slightly annoying.

But with every rock and roll musical comes a hit-or-miss aspect: the music. Whether you’re a fat-bottomed girl or a good old-fashioned lover boy, every Queen song is given a drive and devotion that even Freddie Mercury would admire. The Hard Rock Café rings sweet and true with the notion of “A Crazy Little Thing Called Love.” Energy from the cast during songs scarcely dips, keeping the audience’s attention engaged from curtain to curtain.

If you’re an all-out Queen maniac, this spot-on revival of the classics will have you hanging on the edge of your seat. But to those who don’t feel as strongly about their bicycles, there just won’t be enough substance to justify paying your dues (time after time). Shows need more than just old favorites to succeed, and no matter how many times the lights blind the entire theater or what graphics are projected on the expansive back scrim, “We Will Rock You” is as the Queen song says, a ship riddled with holes, quickly sinking to the bottom of the Seven Seas of Rhye.

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By Janet Mberekpe

A TIME TO ROCK YOU

When “We Will Rock You,” the jukebox musical based on the songs of Queen, takes over the Hippodrome Theatre, one encounters a whole new perspective on rock. Every time a singer sings a song he or she gives it a different interpretation than the familiar version from many years before. The singer’s phrasing and tone give the songs a whole new interpretation.

One singer might make an audience start to cry, for example, while another singer might deliver the same song and make the audience laugh. A singer can change the meaning of a song by his or her body movements and facial expression. A meaning of a song can be changed based on the gender of the singer. This is important because people are used to seeing the Queen perform the songs in a particular way but when they see it performed in a different way in “We Will Rock You,” it is really interesting.

In the song “Somebody to Love,” for example, the Teens Queens start to laugh when Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis) sings, “Can anybody find me somebody to love?” They feel that nobody will love her, so they’re not taking it as seriously as Scaramouche. They are doing funny facial expressions while Scaramouche is busy pouring out her heart into the song. Some of the audience may be laughing at how funny the Teens Queens are behaving while others may be connecting with Scaramouche.

This new approach to the old songs is valuable because people who have heard Queen’s hits before will not be bored when they hear those tunes for the second time. Further refreshing the material are the characters’ costumes, which are quite different from the outfits worn by Queen.

Also the playwrights have surrounded the songs with a whole new story to further change their feeling. The writers have even included recent events like Miley Cyrus twerking because four months ago, when the play was beginning its 11th year in London, Cyrus was not twerking. This updating contributes to the atmosphere of newness because those songs which were written in the 1970s and 1980s are now connected to current of events.

In the opening scene the Gaga Kids, high school students from the future, sing the techno-pop of “Radio Gaga.” After they leave the stage, the audience encounters the loner student Galileo (Brian Crum), who hears strange musical sounds in his ear, echoes of the rock music that was lost many years ago. He realizes he’s very different from the other kids, thanks to his ambition to recreate rock with his melodious voice.

The audience is also introduced to Scaramouche, another social outcast hated by the Teen Queens. Scaramouche wears a black short gown and a black boots while the Teen Queens wear pink, sleeveless crop-tops and a light-pink short skirts. On the one hand, the Teen Queen actresses do a poor job in bringing their characters to life; their voices sound so unreal that it’s hard to imagine their characters in real life. On the other hand, they make up for it with their dancing and singing which express how disgusted they are about Scaramouche’s personality.

Fleeing their oppressive high school, Galileo and Scaramouche meet a group of Bohemians who are struggling to restore the free exchange of thought, fashion and music in a world where everyone dresses, thinks and does the same. Galileo and Scaramouche are the main characters and this play shows their struggle with being different.

Meanwhile, the evil Killer Queen (Jacqueline B. Arnold) and Khashoggi (P.J. Griffith) are trying to stop Galileo and Scaramouche from re-creating rock music. The Killer Queen wears a long cheetah-print coat, a silver belt with a K-initial buckle and a black, elbow-length glove and long black hands. The costume shows the amount of power she acquired and her arrogance toward Khashoggi.

The show's use of inappropriate words and phrases made it very unsuitable for the kids under 13. Most adults' familiarity to the Queen's music makes it easier for them to understand the plot while others are very confused. These different reactions by different demographic groups are a result of some age groups having lived when Queen's songs were first released and some not having been born yet. This problem is overcome by the addition of current events to the plot and also by the use of dancing and comedy.

When Galileo starts to sing "I Want to Break Free" and then Scaramouche joins in, it proves that not only the boy but also the girl is suffering from not being allowed to make their own music. Sometimes in a society people are not allowed to be themselves and the government wants to decide each individual's future. This message is communicated not only by the dialogue and lyrics but also by the dancing and singing. How the performers belt out the notes and move their bodies reveals not only the characters' frustrations but also how magnificent rock might relieve that dissatisfaction.

The play's lack of props makes it difficult for the audience to distinguish between the different scenes. For example in the second act when Buddy (Ryan Knowles), Galileo and Scaramouche are riding the bike, the bike is only turning around. It just seems boring because the audience expects more. One of the show's more successful aspects was the comedy. For example when the male characters are introduced with female artists' names, like Britney Spears (Jared Zirilli) and Oz Osborne (Erica Peck) the audience really laughs. The addition of comedy provides some welcome balance to the more serious music.

While the play has several strengths it also has weaknesses. For example, the flashing lights are very disturbing; they demonstrate the intensity of the rock but it is too much lighting. Another weakness is the volume of the rock songs; they could still have a great show with a lower volume.

"We Will Rock You" not only rocked the entire audience but also made the audience to relate to the challenges the characters faced. For example, when Galileo and Scaramouche sang "You Are My Best Friend," it reminded us how important our best friends are and how we first met them. Behind all the comedy in this play, the writers created the emotional space to mourn and honor artists who have died such as Whitney

Huston. “We Will Rock You” brought a new kind of rock to the audience. The writers’ ability to incorporate current events to the play made the old songs new.

“We Will Rock You”

By Queen and Ben Elton

At the Hippodrome Theatre through October 20

By Asia McCallum

ROCKED AND ROLLED BY QUEEN

The rhythm of your heart, the tempo of your laughter and the timbre of your social consciousness will be tested and ignited during this jukebox musical, “We Will Rock You,” now at the Hippodrome Theatre. Perfectly blending tunes, superstar references, rock memorabilia and relatable characters, the show effectively harmonizes a stage play and a concert, so be prepared to be rocked.

Many previous jukebox musicals have been messy, over processed renditions of already-popular songs being shouted out by overzealous actors surrounded by sloppy props. The organizers of the stage play must carefully and selectively orchestrate the actors, dialogue, costumes and music to cooperate effectively without overshadowing the songs or the message of the plot. Simply put, having a timid opera singer play a leading role in a rock musical may not be the best idea.

The most unique aspect of this show is its success in transforming the lyrics into a dynamic storyline. Instead of relying solely on the songs to provoke emotions, memories, and cheers from the audience, the costumes, setting, and characters contribute to the well-known music. More than likely, the creators of “We Will Rock You” were aiming to offer the audience a walk through the life and lessons of the music world, which was successfully portrayed.

The iPlanet, the futuristic society depicted in the show, belittles individuality, especially of young adults still developing their personalities. Galileo (Brian Justin Crum) and Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis), for example, are taken from high school to a hospital because they want to express their independence by using their time to attempt to create guitars, rebel against the neon colors that everyone else wears, and follow the yearn of the music strumming in their head. Ultimately, they anticipate finding and reviving authentic music.

When they escape the hospital, they are pursued by Killer Queen (Jacqueline B. Arnold), who brainwashes her subjects into using only Internet GaGa owned by GlobalSoft. Most students are robotic beings who routinely “go to [their] room, order pizza and get online.” Galileo and Scaramouche spend the remainder of the show on a journey through isolated parts of the planet, where they meet the Bohemians, unique characters who have adopted

names from famous artists like Katy Perry, Beyonce and Britney Spears. Although they are unaware of the cultural relevance of the artists, they are sure that each has made a musical contribution.

What is rock n' roll? According to the Bohemians, who faithfully reside in Hard Rock Café, it is "Rebellion, style, freedom, anything you want it to be... [But, now] music is only created for money, which is why it has no soul." Although they are a threat, a virus on the hard drive of iPlanet, they ultimately rescue the fate of music, with Galileo and Scaramouche leading the way.

It is not that difficult--all you need is a dream, a guitar and a babe to fight for. This idea is central to illustrating the effectiveness of blending popular rock songs into a play; the themes within the classic tunes coupled with the subliminal slogans in the dialogue promote revolutionary behavior, genuine talent and distinctive swagger.

The visual presentation of the show immaculately expresses the ambiance of the plot. Every individual character exemplifies their own traits through the colors and textures of their costumes. Killer Queen struts her golden corsets and feathery robes, while the Bohemians have tastes in ripped jeans and casual shirts.

Interactive props are scattered around the stage throughout various scenes, like the infamous Harley Davidson motorcycle that gets the heroes to their destination, the antique television that nobody knows how to operate, and the wide screen in the background that displays the menacing ideas of the Killer Queen. The visual aids add to the sensory details that the audience takes in and helps us to decipher the identities of the characters or the background to grasp key events. Moreover, these visuals match the tone of the music.

The conclusion of the show is the most exciting for everyone. As the cast runs out to bow and wave, the theater dims as the screen flickers the message, "Do you want 'Bohemian Rhapsody?'" One is caught off guard by the rush of screams, shouts and whistles. As the cast enters the stage again, the band comes on stage and powerfully shows off their skills. The pleasant surprise exploded when a legendary guitarist from Queen waltzed onto the center of the stage, caressing his guitar and jamming with the crowd. The auditorium was cascaded with sing-along lyrics and sways from side to side, as everyone sang "We are the Champions."

Within concerts alone, the sole purpose is head-banging, dancing and the flow of drinks to add to the excitement. On the other hand, being a spectator at a stage play involves observing, reacting and leaving with a new moral or idea grasped. To leave the theater with a new perspective after seeing a rock musical requires the viewer to listen beyond the blaring band. To solve the challenges of effectively blending the energy of a rock show and the sophistication of a stage play, the playwright's voice and creative eye must be evident in the overall theme and visual presentation of the show. Writer-director Ben Elton achieves this.

Previous jukebox musicals may appear to be too noisy or too messy, which drains the quality of the plot. “We Will Rock You” allows the audience to hear, watch and feel the music while logically building strong dialogue around the tunes, such as the implementation of “Fat Bottomed Girls.” For example, Killer Queen sings the lyrics as a speech to the other characters who react to her comments. Ultimately, the show blends the thrill of the music with the moral of the storyline without overshadowing or overstating either one. Every scene was infused with a melody or rhythm of some sort, which enhanced the complex yet comprehensive nature of the story.

“We Will Rock You”

By Queen and Ben Elton

At the Hippodrome Theatre through October 20

By Arielle Morrow

THE RESURRECTION OF ROCK

If I had to describe “We Will Rock You” in one word, it would be funny. Even if you are not the type to go to a musical, you will not want to leave this one when it is over. You will want to see more of the amazing costumes and hear more of the music that just rocked. The costumes are so vibrant in color and designed so well that each one sets the mood for each scene. You would will leave the Hippodrome blasting the Queen music that you’ve fallen in love with.

Queens’s music succeeds because so many believing fans will not let rock die, so it lives on. This musical entertains you, interacts with you, makes you laugh and brings rock back to life. This play succeeds where others have failed because the costumes, actors/actresses and music come together as one. The play entertains you the whole way through; not one time will you take your eyes off the stage.

Most the people in the play are like robots with no feeling and no opinion. The GaGa Kids are all following the rules of the Killer Queen. But Galileo (Brian Justin Crum) and Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis) discover the resistance club where there is a lot of life and fun. They do not go along with the others because they want to be free from the others’ boredom and conformity.

Although “We Will Rock You” is a brilliant musical and very funny, here and there the lines get a little corny when they overdo the puns. The story takes place on the iPlanet, where everything is digital and run by the evil Killer Queen (Jacqueline Arnold). Galileo and Scaramouche, two students graduating high school, do not like the way the iPlanet is operated, so they go off in search of freedom. Galileo has a special gift to hear musical phrases from the past rock age, and that leads the two teenagers them to the deliverance.

Seeking a better world, they run into a couple, Britney Spears (Jared Zirilli) and Oz (Erica Peck), who leads them to the resistance group. They are rebels in search of the dreamer to help them bring back rock to the iPlanet. The Killer Queen does not want them to succeed for fear she will no longer hold power of the iPlanet. She does everything in her power to stop them.

Despite the play's strengths, at moments the lights are overpowering and blinding. The songs are great, but the body mics at some points are too loud, and at other times so low you cannot hear what the characters are saying. Certain parts of the show are too busy; five different things would be happening at once on the stage, making your eyes move all around and missing some things.

The audience really feels the characters in every limb they move, in every line they recite and in every song they sing. When Scaramouche and Galileo sing about being free in the beginning, you feel the romantic connection as they play with each other and dance around the stage together. They smile at each other and just light up the stage with their vibrant energy towards each other.

From our seats we can feel every emotion Galileo and Scaramouche are feeling. In the beginning when they feel like outcasts, we too long for the freedom they yearn for. Their dances are not only in sync but also filled with the contagious energy of teenagers. The romance was OK, but it does not blend with the rebel story. When you think of a rebel you think of hardcore not lovey-dovey.

The two realize in the beginning they were both different because they did not conform to the norms of society. Different beats play in Galileo's head and Scaramouche does not want to be a part of the typical group called the GaGa Kids. Galileo and Scaramouche have their own thoughts, interests and views on how music should sound.

It is important for you to stand out and stand up for what you believe in. The playwright shows the importance of standing up as he portrays how Galileo and Scaramouche bring the resistance back to life when they find rock, which is not favored by the rest of the population.

To be queen you have to be mean. The evil Killer Queen is doing everything she possibly can to keep her society the way she likes it. She will not approve of real musical instruments or rock music; in her opinion, everything has to be downloaded and upgraded including the GaGa kids. The Killer Queen believes doing something manually lacks the advantages of downloading needed interest or pursuits.

The Killer Queen is trying to kill the dream along with rock; she tries her best to keep rock out of her society and steps on anyone who gets in her way. As the Queen, Arnold is actually scary. Her powerful voice and her fierce movements strike fear into you.

The songs fit in the musical wonderfully, especially those sung by the rebels, because the ideas of rock and rebellion mix so well. The elements of the music matched the idea of

rebels as they dance and sing out having fun. In conclusion this play is amazing. Everything about it is put together very nicely and anyone, no matter what type of music you enjoy, will love this play.

“We Will Rock You”

By Queen and Ben Elton
At the Hippodrome Theatre through October 20

By C.J. Roebuck

RIGHTEOUS, ROCKOUS, AND WORTH THE WAIT

“We Will Rock You,” now at the Hippodrome Theatre, is a jukebox musical built around 24 hits from the British-rock powerhouse Queen. This group is still known for its powerful, cutting-edge sound combined with the voice of one of the greatest rockers of all time, the late Freddy Mercury. If you go into this show expecting to hear Queen just as it sounded with Mercury, you will be sadly disappointed because replacing or even mimicking a high caliber artist would be impossible.

That said, hard-core Queen fans should fear not, because the cast of this show turns the music of Queen into an experience all its own—an experience defined by, of all things, a spot-on social commentary. You may not enjoy the attempts at matching Mercury, but it’s hard to dislike the smattering of pop-culture jokes and satires that help make this performance what it is. Of course, you will only realize this if you can make it through the lackluster beginning of the show and get there.

“We Will Rock You” begins with a dazzling rock ballad complemented by an equally impressive light show as the curtain opens to a futuristic high school setting. Before this happens, a short video has explained that we are on an “iPlanet” where social media and technology control everything. The first thing the audience sees is about 20 kids standing in front of a giant monitor wearing high-tech graduation robes with flashing lights and chrome finish all on a shiny metallic fabric. The image successfully establishes the time as the future, but in terms of communicating to the audience exactly what is going on, starting the show with a song rather than dialogue may catch some off guard.

It is clear from this first number, “Radio GaGa,” that the show is built on music, lighting and costumes, not acting, choreography and plot. While singing, the 20 people on stage engage in coordinated movement that can hardly be called dancing, and they do nothing to draw the audience in any more. For just a casual Queen fan, the lack of big, Broadway-type musical movement coupled with one of the band’s lesser known hits makes the performance less than exciting.

It is after this opener that we meet our male lead, Galileo Figaro (Brian Justin Crum), whose name makes it apparent that the story will rotate around him. He is an outcast from

his social-media-oriented high school because he hears strange words and sounds in his head, and he is labeled by his school's authority figure, Khashoggi (P.J. Griffith), as a "Bohemian," one of the rebels who believe in the power of music, specifically rock.

Galileo and a fellow outsider, Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis), are both reported to GlobalSoft, the corporation in control of all the media on the planet. GlobalSoft's leader, the Killer Queen (Jacqueline B. Arnold), wants to get rid of all Bohemians so as to get rid of all free thought and any uprisings it may create.

All of this information is given to the audience very quickly, and the frenetic pace and seemingly constant playing of Queen songs makes it very hard to follow. This is perfectly epitomized in the hospital scene for it is unclear why Galileo and Scaramouche are put in this place to begin with, and the rapid and impromptu singing of "Under Pressure," a hit song that is not related to their predicament at all, only adds to the confusion.

The pace does slow down eventually, though, just as Galileo and Scaramouche meet the rest of the Bohemians hiding out in the Hard Rock Café in Las Vegas. It is at this point that the balance between dialogue and music evens out, and it is here that the show really begins rocking and rolling as the plot is able to catch up with the rest of what is happening. If you as an audience member can make it to the Hard Rock Café just as Galileo and Scaramouche do, then you too have made it to the Promised Land, for it is at this point that the show's true Broadway style entertainment value emerges.

As the show gets its legs under it, the actors reveal their true quality. At the very least, Crum's big and powerful voice demands the attention his character requires. This is clear as he bursts into his first song, "I Want To Break Free," in such a bold fashion that it seems to catch his fellow actors off guard. Lewis does an excellent job of matching this, as her voice is actually bigger and more powerful than his, a quality used very successfully in her opener, "Someone To Love." Together, even when they have to hold it back as they do for their duet version of "You're My Best Friend," they prove that they can be the driving force that keeps the show on target.

As the primary antagonist, the Killer Queen is way too overdone and eccentric for the rest of the show. Arnold's voice lacks the heavy rock element that Queen music requires, and even amidst the outrageous comedy this show has to offer, her jokes are simply too try-hard, making her character an awkward one, regardless of her singing ability. Thankfully she is not on stage that much, and her main worker, Khashoggi, is a reasonable enough character to minimize the Killer Queen's strangeness and oddities. Together, these antagonists are the most sub-par group of characters in the show.

The musical's much needed comic relief comes from the Bohemians of the Hard Rock Café and their leader, Buddy Holly and the Crickets (Ryan Knowles). In fact, one shining light throughout the show is the cheap brand of one-line comedy that this group turns into almost an art form. Even amongst the rush of Queen songs in the beginning, the writers managed to fit in a few simple jokes directed at pop culture, social media and rock & roll stereotypes that make the pace slightly more bearable.

The joke count then explodes as we meet the Bohemians. They take shots at the music of their age, otherwise known as Computer Recorded Auto-tuned Pop (or just C.R.A.P. for short), while also stepping back to make fun of Miley Cyrus by ‘Twerking’ for an excessive amount of time. Though it is cheap, this humor does a very good job of minimizing the damage done by the rushing of the music-heavy first act.

Buddy Holly and the Crickets is crude, ridiculous and the deliverer of countless zingers, many of which refer to things many young people may not get. But they are not the show’s intended audience. You do not have to be a Queen fan to enjoy “We Will Rock You,” but you have to at least have a good knowledge of popular culture from the past 40 years, or else most of the show will go over your head.

However, if you do possess a suitable knowledge of pop culture, adult humor and Queen’s music, “We Will Rock You” can take on a beautiful meaning of its own. It presents many issues such as gender roles, teenage rebellion and the role of music/social media in society that give the show a nice subtext if you are able to notice it.

All of these things were all very present in Queen’s songs, and though Freddy Mercury is not here to sing them, the message that urges you to let nothing hold you down is still very pertinent. If you are willing to sit through a couple of quickly presented Queen covers to get to a comic story with a nice, deeper meaning, “We Will Rock You” is definitely a production worth attending.

“We Will Rock You”

By Queen and Ben Elton
At the Hippodrome Theatre through October 20

By Markia Smith

TO PUN OR NOT TO PUN, THAT IS THE QUESTION

“We Will Rock You,” a head-banging jukebox musical now at the Hippodrome Theatre, uses the music and lyrics of the legendary British band Queen to hint that the pop and rock music of today has lost sight of its roots. The message is that today’s generation doesn’t really know where the motivation for most pop/rock music comes from.

For example, just before Galileo (Brian Justin Crum) sings “I Want to Break Free” in act one, the principal of a futuristic virtual high school has been talking to Galileo about his outrageous outburst of random song titles. Galileo responds by saying that these thoughts just pop into his head and he feels the need to connect them and find out what they have to do with his life. He basically is saying that he wants to find the precursor of the electronic music he is subject to in his society.

This concept becomes an actual experience when the show's band triggers a roar from an audience more accustomed to music that relies on electronic devices. The experience of a live band playing real instruments accompanied by live singers and dancer proves much more invigorating.

The show begins with a soliloquy from Buddy (Ryan Knowles), who acts as the voice of rock and roll's past, and his direct address really helps engage both the younger and older audience members, although in different ways. Knowles embodied Buddy as easily distracted; for some that reads as a stoner and for others as a ditsy character. This shows that the way that the show will be interpreted differently based on the generational split.

The iPlanet is a world where technology is the basis for everyday life, but the Hard Rock Café is a rebel outpost where the Bohemians live. The iPlanet is obviously aimed at a younger audience with its bright colors and digital screen to its name borrowed from Apple. The Hard Rock Café, by contrast, offers duller colors, set up with tangible set pieces like the television and VCR, to represent the older generation and the simpler ways of life before the big advance in technology.

The show gets off to a great start. A little strobe lighting, some digital imagery to create the iPlanet atmosphere and the bright red and orange costumes all help us stay in tune with what is going on. Throughout the show there are references to pop musicians, popular song titles and social media. The first few references make the audience all laugh, but as the show continues and the references keep recurring the audience splits into two portions: one still laughing wholeheartedly and another slightly giggling. The laughter in both camps slowly dwindles along with the reasoning behind the constant allusions.

In the first act, for example, Galileo (Brian Justin Crum) and Scaramouche (Ruby Lewis) meet the Bohemians, who introduce themselves with the names of musicians from both the past and present, such as Katy Perry, Britney Spears, Michael Jackson, Freddie Mercury and Ozzy Osborne. Though it is pretty funny at first to hear the inappropriate names, they add little to the narrative momentum and seem to be merely a means to intrigue a certain demographic.

Such gambits to attract a younger generation are often present through the journey of the show but not always effective. At one point there is a reference to Twitter that seems completely out of context; Crum delivers the line as if he's going for the punch line instead of saying it more naturally as part of the dialogue.

The only Bohemian name that remains important to the entire storyline is Brit (Jared Zirilli), also known as Britney Spears. Brit risks tries his hardest to fight off the Khashoggi (P.J. Griffith) and the GlobalSoft executives but he doesn't succeed ultimately. He risks his life for Galileo and Scaramouche because it is their destiny to reach the Knowisphere and find the roots of rock and roll music, despite Killer Queen (Jacqueline B. Arnold) and Khashoggi's (P.J. Griffith) efforts to keep them away.

Brit's fight to save Scaramouche and Galileo ties back into the differences between modern and older pop and rock music. This fight symbolizes the struggle the older generation faces when they try to get the younger generation to see that without the music of the past, the music of today would be non-existent. Even though Brit dies, Scaramouche and Galileo represent the rebellious part of the younger generation who see the value in knowing where today's music got its motivation.

Despite the overuse of pop-culture references, "We Will Rock You" is a well executed show. The contrast between the digitally projected set and an actual set, between the GaGa Kids' brightly colored, symmetrical costumes and the Bohemians' dark and tattered costumes, and between pop ballads such as "Somebody to Love" and rockers such as "Another One Bites the Dust" reflect the divide between the older and younger viewers in the audience. These juxtapositions bring to life to that fine line between the two generations. Even though the music in the show is all from the same band and same genre of music, each of the show's components enhances the dynamic storyline that playwright Ben Elton created.

The acting in the "We Will Rock You" also helps. As the main characters Galileo and Scaramouche, Crum and Lewis are very relatable from their very first encounter through to the end. The two actors have actually found a way to fall in love with one another on stage and fully commit to that. They don't fall into the trap of some jukebox-musicals who focus solely on serving the music and not relating to the show's reason for using the particular songs; Crum and Lewis actually apply the lyrics to the narrative.

As a result they are able to bring a sense of reality to their characters' relationship even though the show's premise isn't based in realism. When Scaramouche sings "Somebody to Love," those familiar with the song would expect her to be singing about finding the perfect lover. But what she is actually singing about, within the context of the script, is finding acceptance in the world by finding someone who views the world in a similar way. To successfully portray these fictional characters through song and dance so the audience is able to empathize with is worthy of praise.

Aside from the overuse of references, "We Will Rock You" is a show that works for both the original Queen fans as well as younger theatergoers just being introduced to Queen. The way the show has been written and directed will not inhibit those familiar with the music Queen from enjoying the show nor does it limit the understanding of those who aren't. It explores the world of the younger generation with its use of technology and modern referencing all while sticking to the older generation's view that modern-day pop and rock has lost sight of its roots.

By the end of "We Will Rock You" it is clear to us that today's music and yesterday's music have important differences but are ultimately linked. Overall the show does a good job of giving the Queen fans a new understanding of what the songs actually mean through the storyline and the characters relationships with one another. And it also allows for a whole new generation of people to be introduced to the music of Queen while going on a journey with the characters in "We Will Rock You."

