



This boy band's winning ways

BoyGroove - Highly Recommended
Tarragon Extra Space, 30 Bridgman Ave.
Next performance today at 6:45 p.m.

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Fringe Festival Reviews

RICHARD OUZOUNIAN, THEATRE CRITIC

The next big thing has finally arrived. Ever since *The Drowsy Chaperone* made the leap in 1999, eager eyes scan the Fringe each summer for the breakout show with a real commercial future. Well, say hello to BoyGroove.

This zappy, happy deconstruction of the boy-band phenomenon is one of the most enjoyable shows I've ever seen at the Fringe and it would only take the slightest bit of reworking to move comfortably into a mid-sized house for a nice commercial run.

Chris Craddock wrote the book, with Aaron Macri providing the music and lyrics. They are both extremely clever dudes.

Not only does Macri get the vanilla-smoothie sound of these bands down perfectly, but he also knows just how much sly humour to stick into the lyrics. And Craddock's book is packed with a winning combination of socko laughs and slashing satire as he follows this group from creation to destruction.

We see how four attractive young men get picked for their personalities, rather than their talent. There has to be a sexy boy (Kevin), a cuddly boy (Andrew), a bad boy (John) and a flashy boy (Lance). A bitchy choreographer whips them into shape ("You move like pregnant hippos!") and before too long, they're enjoying the benefits of "Ecstasy, sex and a good dental plan."

What follows won't seem strange to anyone who watches MuchMusic or has ever followed the exploits of the Backstreet Boys and their ilk. They get rich, ditch their manager, start flying too high in various ways, wind up in a couple of headline-grabbing scandals and finally fall apart.

Unlike in real life, their rise to the top is far more interesting than their slide from grace and the major flaw in Craddock's script is that he dwells too lengthily on Lance's gay romance with another rock star and the subsequent run-in with a homophobic rapper. But those are minor complaints. Kenneth Brown's staging is a wonder, with the four performers never seeming to stop moving for a single second. The quartet are all killer performers. Jon Peterson's John rages with the best of them, Scott Waiters gives Lance just the right edge, Andrew Bursey makes Andrew the Pillsbury Doughboy of Rock Music and Matt Alden's Kevin is every totally adorable guy who ever knew just when to bare his chest to the crowd.

Just before it starts, the announcer asks "Do you like singing? Do you like dancing? Do you like cute boys?" If you do, you'll love *BoyGroove*. It deserves to live long past The Fringe.