

Group: Grayshott Stagers
Show: Return to the Forbidden Planet
Venue: Grayshott Village Hall
Date: Wednesday 24th May 2023



Director: Tony Carpenter & Joe White
Musical Director: Rob Miller
Choreographer: Laura Musco

REPORT FOR SOCIETY

Return to the Forbidden Planet – This jukebox musical was first performed in the 1983. The mixture of Shakespeare style libretto and rock and roll classics from the 50s and 60s is not an obvious combination but it attained the Olivier Award for Best New Musical for both 1989 and 1990.

Front of House: The front of house team was trained to invite the audience to become passengers on this flight of GSS Albatross and in doing so welcomed everyone cordially.

The Programme: The clarity and detail in the programme is a treat and so easy to read. Lots of interesting information including the Safety Briefing.

Scenery & Props: The well designed, in-house designed flight deck of the spaceship provided the set for the players and concealed spaces for a guitar and a keyboard players. The control panels, door openings and other control features were well designed and worked very well. Particular note must be given to the highly appropriate props and in particular the ‘monster’ with multiple tentacles. Not only was it well made it ‘worked’ very efficiently – a really good team behind it.

Lighting, Visuals & Sound: There was good use of lighting techniques to create atmosphere where needed. The sound enhancement was well managed. Putting aside any technical difficulties, the pre-recorded video of ‘the newsreader’ worked well and the various slides and video clip were innovative and well-created.

Costumes & Hair: The spaceship setting gives rise to a variety of colourful space outfits and a very effective silver space suit for Ariel complete with roller skates. The colourful wigs for the female members of the ensemble whilst suitable could perhaps have been inspected to ensure they all looked the same on stage.

Music & Musicians: With the MD, Rob Miller, on the stage with his guitar and pianist the remaining three musicians were seated in front of the audience. They worked well together despite the distance between them. Particularly during the ensemble numbers, it was not always easy to hear all the words however this may have been due to the balance between singers and band. This is always difficult with rock-style numbers. The music had been well-rehearsed, and the cast appeared comfortable in their singing parts.

The Production: This foray into joint directing by Tony Carpenter and Joe White was well received by the audience. Both directors have had experience as actors in a variety of shows and certainly brought their skills and interests to bear in this production. The opening safety briefing by the *Bosun*, Brezetta Thonger, was delivered with great clarity and really got the audience into the mood for the performance. Richard Ashton maintained the role of *Captain Tempest* with style and endurance – hardly a moment off the stage during the whole performance. Kyrie Carpenter was exceptionally good as *Ariel* maintaining all the mannerisms with great care. The

singing of the *Science Officer* (Kate Buxton) was very pleasurable to listen to. Whilst there was a variety of experience amongst the principals, they certainly formed a good team and showed no weak links with everyone working very hard to maintain their characters - this was not always easy with the Shakespearian style libretto and rock-style music.

Grayshott Stagers once again took on a challenge, very appropriately raised the roof and thoroughly entertained their audience whose murmurs of appreciation could be heard very clearly as we left the theatre. Well done Grayshott.

Kay Rowan – South East Regional Councillor