

PRODUCTION	<i>Guys and Dolls</i>
COMPANY	Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society
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Loesser's more with BATS' *Guys and Dolls* It has been an unbelievable 31 years since Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society tackled Frank Loesser's musical *Guys and Dolls*. Fans of the show will be delighted that they've selected it for their second major offering of this year, following the successful production of *South Pacific* earlier in the year.

Set in New York, it's a tale of gambler Sky Masterson (Stephen Westwood), who is bet by desperate fellow gambler Nathan Detroit (a perfectly cast Martin Webb) that he cannot take Salvation Army captain Miss Sarah Brown (Theresa Lunn) to Havana.

Nathan can't find anywhere to host a crap game and his troubles are complicated further by the fact that he has a fiancée of 12 years, the quirky Miss Adelaide (Liz Illett), who's getting a bit fed up waiting for her big day.

There's a lot to look at right from the beginning of this show, choreographed and directed by the inestimable Ray Jeffery and with musical direction by Neil Streeter.

For starters, there's a terrific procession of monochromatic costumes and a real dog, played by handsome hounds Jake Bevan and Jake Shallow for the run.

In fact, the fantastic costumes are worth a mention all of their own, from Sky's slick suit and Miss Adelaide's various outfits to Nathan's eye-popping final ensemble.

The leading duo's performances are particularly charming. Stephen boasts, appropriately enough given that it's 'Movember', a moustache and his Sky is a superbly smooth operator, nipping all over the stage tipping his hat.

Stephen has a terrific voice too and he's the centre of one of the most sparkling numbers, the rendition of *Luck Be A Lady*. The latter also showcases tremendous choreography, as does much of the production, as good use is often made of the upper level of the staging.

Theresa, who professed to be worried about her 'drunk' scene in her pre-show piece in this newspaper, is completely winning, particularly when Sarah gets a little sozzled and attempts to compete with a beautiful dancer.

Martin is a perfect, slightly panicky and flying-by-the-seat-of-his-pants Nathan Detroit, and elsewhere Dave Scanlan as Nicely-Nicely does a wonderful job of the lead vocal in a super Sit Down You're Rocking the Boat, complete with a fun heavenly chorus of nuns.

The scenes in the Hot Box nightclub are a fabulous burst of light and colour.

Audiences will also admire the two dialogue-free episodes when the music takes its turn in the spotlight.

I must end on a final mention for Ben Shaaaaaaaaallow who plays Harry the Hooooooooorse – you'll understand when you see him!

Joanne Mace