



NICK BRANNAM
DIRECTOR | CHOREOGRAPHER

PRODUCTION	<i>Legally Blonde The Musical</i>
COMPANY	Basingstoke Amateur Theatrical Society
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Watching this production will certainly take your breath away. If it's not the many complex dance routines which will have you watching agog or the speed and number of the costume changes, it's the incredible staging or the energy of the performances.

Goodness, how hard the company and backstage crew must have worked to bring this show together for fortunate local audiences! Hats off to all of them.

This plot of this modern musical, which is based on the 2001 film, is known to many; when she's dumped for not being serious enough, blonde sorority queen Elle Woods turns heartbreak into opportunity and heads off to Harvard to complete a law degree.

BATS' Elle is seasoned performer Laura Newborough, who has a track record of absolutely nailing the role of a blonde with a big heart (Audrey in *Little Shop of Horrors*). She looks sensational and leads the company from the front, ably assisted by top veterans Joe Humberstone, Ian Moseley and David Izzo, as her new love interest Emmett.

David brings power to Emmett's backstory, particularly in *Chip On My Shoulder*, and his relationship with Elle develops into something wonderfully tender by key number *Legally Blonde*.

Casting is inspired and it's wonderful to watch the awesome Sally Manning absolutely let loose as Elle's best friend Paulette. She and her amour, the UPS guy (Bryn Hughes), have a ton of fun and will raise a lot of laughs. Stalwart scene-stealer Ian 'Spud' Smith is also an absolute treat as Paulette's irresistible (ahem) former paramour.

But the 'old' hands don't have it all their own way; a lot of the strength of the show is in the way it flawlessly meshes more experienced performers with relatively new blood.

Elle's key trio of friends are brilliantly brought to life by the sparky Rhianon Mone, Chloe Ballard and Luannsa Goodman, whose confidence marks them as definite stars of the future. They are supported by a wonderful chorus group of girls who have a lot to do right from opening number *Omigod You Guys* and don't put a foot wrong from that point on.

BATS' Legally Blonde showcases terrific character work across the board, from the leads down to those in smaller roles (including Hayley Taphouse, Liz Scorey and Lauren Blaxill) or those in the background. Not a detail has been neglected, right down to the certain book a young lady is reading in the hair salon.

And its two canine stars are sure to be popular with audiences, too.

It's no surprise that all of this has been directed and choreographed by 25 year-old Nick Brannam, who has proven himself to have astounding creative vision at the helm, and demonstrates it once again here.

His demanding routines are executed with skill and flair – you'll be exhausted just watching the seriously impressive one involving skipping ropes. Its visual impact is incredible so hats off to Emily Hemmings (who plays Brooke) and co. Nick suffuses the material with new life, supplying bang for your buck and value for money, bringing a restaurant, sorority house, courthouse, Harvard, Elle's bedroom, bathroom and a hair salon to life right in town on the Haymarket stage.

This corker is brimming over with fizz – enjoy.

Joanne Mace