



Philip
Key's

08

Culture Diary

THEATRE Once Upon a Time at the Adelphi/ Liverpool Playhouse

Musical brings hotel heyday back to life

BY VICKY ANDERSON

Daily Post Staff

THERE'S been a lot of anticipation about this one, the first ever musical staged at the Playhouse and a musical about the infamous Adelphi hotel, to boot.

And now the waiting's over, no need to worry – it's surely an unequivocal thumbs up.

It's set in the Adelphi's 1930s heyday, when Hollywood stars came to stay and rumour had it Hitler used to work in the kitchens, and is a grand backdrop for the Titanic-style romance of two ordinary working-class Liverpudlians.

Liverpool 08
EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

An incredible revolving set that serves in turn as the lobby, staircase, ballroom, rooftop and bedrooms of the Adelphi spells out the ambitions of the piece.

In the lead role of Alice, Julie Atherton is a beautiful, very natural talent with a crystal clear voice, who seems to have to work hard to project herself over the rest of the jazz hands-happy cast, something which is particularly noticeable alongside the showy confidence of her love interest Thompson (Simon Bailey, of pop opera band Teatro).

She exudes understated class and he, a knowing and enjoyable cheesiness, which quickly shows itself to be deliberate, as easily the best numbers of the night revolve around his undeniable charm – the thoroughly entertaining Show Tune (an MGM-style number set in a Dingle alleyway) and the impressively choreographed Thompson from Accounts.



'Adelphi' stars Julie Atherton, as Alice, and Neil McCaul, as Lord Rothschild

Helen Carter, in full Margi-Clarke-in-Letter-to-Brezhnev style, is great as the Scouse chambermaid with big dreams.

The company each take on at least one role throughout the show with a dizzying array of costume changes. The odd dodgy accent or rare slight out of time step makes it all the more endearing.

The first half, which begins in modern day and harks back to the sense of Liverpool optimism in the 1930s, is fantastic fun. However, this

means that the more serious plot devices are all piled together in the second half – the dooming of the love affair, the onset of World War II – and things all get rather staid.

Again Thompson saves the day with the touching Take a Moment, and when a heartbroken Alice belts out The Next Ten Seconds it is easy to believe she means every word.

Despite the second half slowdown, this show is full of heart and laughs.

vickyanderson@dailypost.co.uk

Waiting
is over
– and
it's a
thumbs
up