

## Once Upon a Time at the Adelphi

Published **Thursday 3 July 2008** at **14:40** by **Chris High**

Like a bottle of vintage Krug, there is an awful lot of fizz with Phil Willmott's musical. The set, a revolving lobby, bedroom and roof of the once grand city centre hotel, is gloriously constructed. The many costumes are sumptuous and add enough colour and depth to make the show appear to have a cast larger than 15. The music and songs are quite catchy, with lyrics underlining the city's heritage and the dance routines straight out Busby Berkeley epics.

The trouble, however, is that Once Upon a Time at the Adelphi isn't quite sure what it wants to be - a play, a musical or an out-and-out cabaret. Yes, it's fun, and yes it's warmly entertaining, but strangely it is also more like a bottle of Lambrini than Krug in substance and it drifts into something of a Titanic - or even The Shining - wannabe towards the conclusion, but without the special effects.

With that said, however, the performances are packed with energy as the cast double, triple and quadruple up with great skill. Julie Atherton's Alice, the hotel's thirties assistant manager, and Simon Bailey, her reformed rogue, Tommy, both lead the line well, while Neil McCaul demonstrates his obvious talent at every turn and is exemplary as the Hollywood movie star in search of a bit of rough.

Yet it is the quite outstanding Helen Carter who seems to carry the whole thing along. Both her lovelorn chambermaid, Babs, and her performance as the Hollywood star's sloshed, Bronx-accented wife steal the show by a country mile.

Once Upon a Time at the Adelphi is worth seeing, but it would be a whole lot better were it focussed on what it wanted to say and how to say it.

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### Production information

**Playhouse, Liverpool**, June 28-July 19

**Author/director:**

Phil Willmott

**Producer:**

Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse

**Cast includes:**

Julie Atherton, Simon Bailey, Helen Carter, Neil McCaul, Tom Oakley, Natasha Seale, Nick Smithers

**Running time:**

2hrs 20mins

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Production information can change over the run of the show.