

*Bat Boy the Musical*, Story and Book by Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming, Music and Lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe  
Directed by Rob Ormsby with Musical Direction by Dave Wellington and Choreography by Nicki Bramwell-Cooke  
Porirua Little Theatre, Whiteside Lane, Titahi Bay till 22 November

Reviewed by Ewen Coleman Saturday 15 November

As far as quirky, off-the-wall musicals go, *Bat Boy the Musical*, Porirua Little Theatre's current production, would probably be equal to most. A sort of cross between *Little Shop Of Horrors* and *Indiana Jones* in the style of a double B Grade movie.

Based on a little known comic strip in the *Weekly World News*, *Bay Boy* is as improbable a story as you're ever likely to find and stretches the imagination and credibility to the extreme, the saving grace in this instance being the excellent production the play is given by director Rob Ormsby and his team.

The Bat Boy of the title is a half-boy/half-bat found in a cave near the sleepy little town of Hope Falls. He is taken to the home of the local vet Dr Parker (Stephen Gibbs). The vet's wife Meredith (Kirsty Justice) and teenage daughter Shelley (Corinne Woollett) take a shine to Bat Boy (Sam Benton) and decide to educate him into being an articulate human. The townsfolk however aren't too sure about this, believing that Bat Boy has brought a curse on the town. Everything comes to a head in a rather melodramatic climax at the end when the true nature of Bat Boy and how he came to be like he is revealed.

The music is essentially rock opera with a mix of ballads, country and gospel, which although none of the songs are all that memorable the tunes are catchy and do provide for some great dance routines. The success of the show however is on the perfect mix of an excellent cast and innovative staging which this production has in bucket-loads.

A revolve is used to great effect, allowing the many scenes to flow effortlessly from one to the other. The cartoon style of the various settings, coupled with the brilliant lighting effects and imaginative use of film gives the production a polished professionalism rarely seen in local theatre productions. And the cast of 12, many of whom play multiple roles, perform with an equal amount of style and professionalism, their energy never flagging for a moment, playing their characters the only way they can be in a show like this - straight, refraining from pushing the rather trite story line too far over the top, even though the audience still laughed and tittered during supposedly serious moments. Vocally the range of voices was excellent, all of the lead characters well equipped for the style of singing each was required to deal with. And although the musical interludes under the dialogue intruded too much at times making the dialogue inaudible this was nevertheless a highly charged, engaging and very entertaining show not to be missed.