

Herald article

## Minor Cast of Major Note

The rise of the curtain for Grease, the new production by the 14-20s Music and Drama Society, was delayed for 10 minutes on its opening night this week, so great was the level of interest that the show had generated. Based on the hit 70s film of the same name, Grease draws its characters from the sub-culture of coleslaw chomping, Coke-drinking American students.

In this world, where guitars are gee-tars and a tub of hair gel only lasts the average of 30 minutes, white tee-shirts and leather jackets are 'in' and any word with more than two syllables is too much for the characters to comprehend.

This must have been the most suitable show produced by any local society this year. For too long groups have tried to aspire to productions they can neither cope with, nor are particularly suited to.

Grease has everything in which the age group of the performers can identify- problems with boyfriends or girlfriends, rock music to name but two. Hits like Summer Nights or Greased Lightning are at least within the living memories of most of the cast. This is not so with most stage musicals for the stage.

The 14-20s with their youth which matched the characters, melted into the songs with ease. Martin Beed, playing the part made famous by John Travolta, and with the help of modern cosmetics, looking remarkably like him, led the cast with his opposite, Catherine Longman. Catherine was particularly noted for her beautiful voice: a delight to listen to.

But the show was no means dominated by two people. Both teenager revellers belonged to groups of the appropriate sex, and subsequently the competing groups had to notch up musical points. Whether they were Pink Ladies or Burger Palace Boys, singing and dancing became a necessity.

And if you happened to be a Morris Minor, you were not safe. One had been cut into thirds, presumably by the gang of boys who were seen wielding chains and baseball bats, and the poor car had then suffered the indignity of being painted bright red and yellow. Sacrilege! Apparently. Cadillacs are hard to come by in East Devon.

Neil Harding, Fay Bowden, Stuart Robb, Lewis Knight, Katie Lawrence, Samantha Beaton, Michael and Tony Wing, and Jo Casley all took a turn in the spotlight of solo performance.

All achieved high standards, especially considering the distractions provided by microphone singing. Though difficult to ignore, the effect of the microphones was to the benefit of the audience.

This show which will be remembered in the town for its musical brilliance, (the seven piece band providing wonderful accompaniment for the cast). Its weakness is in the deep silence which often followed raucous numbers, its hard keeping a high energy level throughout a show, and this one was no different.

Grease, directed by Sheila Edwards with musical direction by Ian Bond, ends its run at the Pavilion, Exmouth tomorrow.