

Review of The Rocky Horror Show

Live performances offer an immersive theatrical experience that blends visual, auditory, and emotional elements to create a lasting impression. The Rocky Horror Show, a cult classic musical by Richard O'Brien, is known for its bold themes, eccentric characters, and interactive audience participation. I recently had the opportunity to attend a live performance of this show, and it was a fascinating experience filled with vibrant costumes, dynamic choreography, and impressive vocal performances. However, while many aspects of the production were well-executed, some elements, such as the accents, fell slightly short.

This review will critically analyze various aspects of the performance, including costumes, hair and makeup, set design, choreography, singing, and acting. Additionally, I will incorporate information from academic sources, reviews, and industry perspectives to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the production.

Costume Design

One of the standout elements of The Rocky Horror Show is its extravagant and flamboyant costumes, which play a crucial role in setting the tone of the performance. Costume designer Sue Blane, who worked on the original stage and film adaptations, famously stated that the costumes were not inspired by punk fashion but instead contributed to its emergence (Blane, 2015). This influence continues in modern productions, where costumes remain a key visual aspect of the show.

The costumes in this performance stayed true to the aesthetic established in previous adaptations, featuring an array of fishnet stockings, corsets, platform boots, and gothic-inspired attire. Frank-N-Furter's dramatic corset and cape ensemble captured the essence of the character's extravagant persona, while the cast's costumes effectively conveyed their transformations throughout the story. The contrast between Brad and Janet's modest clothing at the beginning and their more revealing outfits later in the show visually emphasized their journey of self-discovery.

Costumes in musical theatre are not just about visual appeal; they also help define character arcs and reinforce thematic elements (Monks, 2010). In this production, the costumes successfully enhanced the storytelling, reflecting the show's themes of liberation, self-expression, and gender fluidity.

Hair and Makeup

Another highlight of the production was the exceptional hair and makeup design. The heavy use of theatrical makeup, particularly for Frank-N-Furter and the Transylvanians, added to the larger-than-life, almost surreal quality of the show.

Frank-N-Furter's bold makeup, featuring dramatic contouring, exaggerated eyebrows, and deep red lips, was reminiscent of the 1975 film version while still feeling fresh. The ensemble

also had unique, stylized looks that contributed to the overall aesthetic of the production. The hairstyling complemented the makeup well, with wild curls, sculpted updos, and punk-inspired spikes adding to the visual spectacle.

Hair and makeup play a crucial role in defining character identities in theatre (Lehman, 2017). In *The Rocky Horror Show*, these elements were used effectively to highlight the contrast between the straight-laced Brad and Janet and the eccentric residents of Frank-N-Furter's castle. Overall, the attention to detail in hair and makeup helped bring the characters to life and added to the immersive experience.

Set Design

The set design was another impressive element of the production. It successfully captured the eerie, gothic, and somewhat comedic atmosphere of *The Rocky Horror Show*. The staging effectively used lighting, props, and movable set pieces to transition between different locations, such as the castle's laboratory, the bedroom scenes, and the final performance.

One of the most striking set pieces was the laboratory, which featured glowing tubes, metallic accents, and a futuristic aesthetic reminiscent of classic B-movie science fiction films. This setting reinforced the show's homage to 1950s sci-fi and horror tropes (Harvey, 2014). The use of neon lighting and bold colors also added a rock-and-roll edge to the production.

Additionally, the set design played a crucial role in audience engagement. The production incorporated elements that extended beyond the stage, such as interactive props and lighting effects that reached into the audience, enhancing the immersive nature of the show. This aligns with research on interactive theatre, which suggests that breaking the fourth wall enhances audience participation and emotional connection to the performance (Freshwater, 2009).

Choreography and Dance Performance

Choreography is an essential component of any musical, and in *The Rocky Horror Show*, it serves to heighten the energy and campy nature of the production. The dance numbers were well-executed, with the cast displaying a strong sense of rhythm and synchronization.

The iconic "Time Warp" sequence was a particular highlight, featuring dynamic movements and playful interactions between the performers and the audience. The simplicity of the choreography made it easy for audience members to participate, a tradition that has become synonymous with *The Rocky Horror Show* experience. According to Taylor (2016), participatory choreography in musical theatre can enhance audience enjoyment by fostering a sense of inclusion.

Other dance sequences, such as "Sweet Transvestite" and "Hot Patootie," were also well-choreographed, effectively complementing the music and adding to the show's

high-energy feel. The movement style blended elements of jazz, rock-and-roll, and burlesque, creating a visually engaging performance that matched the show's eclectic nature.

Vocal Performances and Harmonies

The vocal performances in this production were strong, with the lead actors delivering powerful renditions of the show's well-known songs. Frank-N-Furter's performer showcased impressive vocal control and range, particularly in "Sweet Transvestite" and "I'm Going Home." The harmonies in ensemble numbers were also well-executed, creating a rich and layered sound that enhanced the musical arrangements.

One of the key challenges in The Rocky Horror Show is balancing the theatrical rock-opera style with clear vocal delivery. Some productions struggle with maintaining vocal clarity due to the energetic nature of the show, but this performance successfully balanced strong vocal projection with expressive storytelling. The live band also contributed to the overall impact, delivering a punchy, rock-inspired accompaniment that added to the show's energy.

Accents and Acting

While many elements of the performance were outstanding, one area that fell slightly short was the accents. The Rocky Horror Show traditionally features a mix of American and British accents, depending on the production. In this performance, some actors struggled to maintain consistent accents, with occasional lapses into more neutral or inconsistent speech patterns.

Accents in theatre play a crucial role in character development and world-building (Crystal, 2014). Inconsistencies in accent work can be distracting and may affect the audience's ability to fully immerse themselves in the story. While the actors' overall performances were engaging, the occasional inconsistency in pronunciation and delivery detracted slightly from the otherwise polished execution of the show.

Despite this minor flaw, the actors succeeded in conveying the humor, camp, and over-the-top personalities required for The Rocky Horror Show. The comedic timing, physical expressions, and chemistry between cast members contributed to an enjoyable and lively performance.

Conclusion

Overall, this production of The Rocky Horror Show was an entertaining and well-executed performance that successfully captured the spirit of the original musical. The standout elements included the exceptional costume design, striking hair and makeup, immersive set design, and energetic choreography. The vocal performances were also strong, with well-executed harmonies and dynamic musical arrangements.

However, the inconsistency in accents was a noticeable weakness that slightly detracted from the overall performance. Despite this, the show remained highly engaging, and the audience participation element enhanced the experience.

Live theatre offers a unique, communal experience that cannot be replicated by film or digital media (Auslander, 2008). This performance of *The Rocky Horror Show* demonstrated the power of live performance to entertain, engage, and immerse audiences in a world of theatrical fantasy.

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