

# STAGE THE WHAT'S ON REVIEWS

## Shout

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This is an affectionate, high-energy, musical reminder of the Swinging Sixties. Along with the 32 songs from that decade are memory-jogs of hippies, sit-ins, the Beatles, man on the moon, Top of the Pops, Carnaby Street, World Cup, the twist, fashions, and laughable TV ads.



**Donna Steele, Su Pollard, Claire Sweeney and Shona White in Shout - The Musical at the Churchill Theatre, Bromley and touring**  
Photo: Alastair Muir

Judging by the response of the first night audience, Those Were the Days indeed.

It is obligatory for all themed musical shows to finish with a reprise of the night's big numbers and here, with the whole cast singing and dancing, the rest of us are invited to join in.

No invitation necessary - everyone stands, sings, claps on the beat and applauds. It must be a delight for the artists.

Since those 32 songs are the sole purpose of the production, the story-line is necessarily on the thin side but works reasonable well - three girls seeking fame, love, and sixties London lifestyle head for a Peckham hair-dressing salon run by Su Pollard.

She is nothing like her TV chambermaid Peggy, and along with her footwork, is surprisingly good at selling a song. One belter earns an ovation.

Howard Jones will never have it better. He's the sole man in the company of five eye-catching girls and apart from putting up a good show for us males he charms, amuses and most definitely does his career prospects no harm. Ideal casting.

Claire Sweeney heads the girls and while all get their solos, she has more singing-and-shaking spots throughout and handles them with punchy confidence.

Shona White may play the inevitable geek but triumphs with her singing, the strength of her voice overcoming the weakness of the character.

And Donna Steele, as the would-be Twiggy, Louisa Maxwell, and Julie Stark complete the gorgeous five. When not strutting their stuff, they are out there vocalising.

Yet amid the short skirts, beehive hair-dos and fun, the songs such as Shout, Downtown, Let's Twist Again and Big Spender are the stars. And Yesterday When I was Young will register with some.

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## THEATREWORLD

by Geoffrey Billingsley for Theatreworld Internet Magazine.

SHOUT!

Based on a concept by Philip George and David Lowenstein.

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Now playing at The Churchill Theatre, Bromley, until Saturday, February 16th, 2008.

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The 60's was a decade and a half, wasn't it? By that, I don't mean it ended in 1975 by way of some Life on Mars experience to include the horrors of decimalisation and the 3 day week and power cuts everywhere. It's just that for those of us who lived through it, it seemed to cram so much in that, when you look back, you have to ask yourself was it just the '66 World Cup Final that went to extra time?

Most of my crowd started it as small children and ended it on the verge of our first job and adulthood. Significant is too insignificant a word to describe that ten year period that changed the world.

SHOUT! is a story about 3 young ladies who come down from the north to London. Well, they kick off in Peckham as Ruby's Aunt Yvonne lets them stay above her "stylish" hair salon. Ruby is played by Claire Sweeney, with the irreplaceable Su Pollard as Aunt Yvonne. Both of these, major stars in their own right, are excellent. Sweeney is stunning and confident - Su Pollard is Su Pollard but gives an excellent performance in this music show celebrating the 60's. Have you ever met a nasty Claire? Or Clare. No, neither have I yet - they're all lovely..!

This production really is all about the music but it is cleverly linked with adverts of the time acted out very well by "The Man" - Howard Jones. Some of them really are funny, others not so but it matters not. There are over 30 songs featured and not necessarily the ones you might expect. Lots of Petula Clark songs + I Only Wanna Be With You and Lets Twist Again, highlights of the first half but top marks go to Georgina, played by Donna Steele for To Sir, With Love. Goosebumps time.

There is a story line of sorts with Ms Sweeney gambling with an affair with a married man, Betty (Shona White) getting in the family way on the rebound after being dumped by her man in the forces and Georgina - the afore-mentioned Donna Steele - as a confused young thing, believing her boyfriend only has eyes for her, when in fact he is practising a pastime that even as recently as the '60's was not something that society readily accepted. She also wants to be an actress but needless to say, all three go through some tough times but come out at the end better for it.

The 2nd half has even more music than the first - Little by Little (Dusty), Alfie, sung by Claire, You Don't Have To Say You Love Me (more Dusty). Then, for me anyway, Surprise, Surprise of the night - Su Pollard knocks out Cilla's You're My World and the Churchill audience rise to their feet in appreciation, including the little old man at the end of row F who was suffering a bit in the first half with his hearing aid..!!

I Close My Eyes and Count to Ten, (bit more Dusty), Those Were the Days and Yesterday When I Was Young - this one sang by all the girls - just topped it for me. A rousing finale with the audience up and joining in - the House Full signs are becoming a pleasant state of affairs at The Churchill.

I left pondering whether that ball was over the line, did the Russian linesman have a decent enough view?

Then it occurred to me that while a penalty shoot out would have been out of the question, extra time should be compulsory for shows such as SHOUT!