

RIVERSIDE THEATRE COMPANY : 13

Director : Richard Mann

Musical Director : Ian Tipping

Vocal Coach/Asst MD : Jo Ryan

Choreographer : Sara Johnson

Performed at Comberton Village College on Saturday, 17th July

This was believed to be the English premiere of this successful Broadway Musical and it suited the skills and abilities of this exciting youth company perfectly. Their strength in both singing and dancing is tremendous and the score of the show is very memorable. An enormous amount of work had gone into the presentation and this really paid off with a simple but effective set, some nice costumes and a few electrifying effects including a dancing ape and an explosion of silver confetti. All of the company are well rehearsed and this paid off particularly in the big chorus and dance numbers.

It almost seems wrong to single out any of the principals as, literally, there were no weak links and total commitment and enthusiasm shone out from everybody. However, some performances were particularly strong and these included Joshua Haynes as Brett, leader of the Jocks, Katy Botham as Kendra, the most popular cheerleader and her jealous friend, Lucy, played by Freya Pibworth. At the heart of the story, however, were the outcasts, Sarah Ryan as Patrice, Charlotte Hurden as Candice and Evan West as the ever-optimistic Archie. These three created a very sympathetic core to the story of a young boy's approach to manhood as he prepares for his Bar Mitzvah and wants to increase his popularity through some rather dubious tactics. As Evan, the boy in question, Liam Brook was sensational. Liam has been steadily improving over the last few years and this was certainly the finest performance that I have seen him give. He perfectly captured all the various nuances of the part and quickly achieved the full sympathy of the audience. This is a very happy show for a youthful cast and may well become a teenage favourite.

Michael G Williamson

NODA Regional Representative : District 1