

Everybody's Talking About Jamie

Review by Frankie, Year 13

This show at the Bristol Hippodrome was the triumphant return to musical theatre we have all been waiting for!

The high energy of 'Jamie' made us realise how much we have missed theatre. It's those moments of real connection and catharsis that we were lacking in lockdown. Being able to safely gather together and all enjoy a show as a group of Drama students has really lifted our spirits, as well as aiding us in our end of year exams.

What's 'Jamie' about?

The musical tells the story of 16 year-old Jamie New, who we watch go through the journey of becoming a drag queen and who wears a dress to his school prom.

Based on the 2011 documentary 'Jamie: Drag Queen at 16', the show presents a realistic yet absolutely joyous telling of Jamie's story. The show featured a number of recognisable faces including Shobna Gulati as Ray and Shane Richie as Loco Chanelle.

Layton Williams played the title role of Jamie. This casting was perfect, and he fully embodied the fabulous role. The dancing is perfectly executed, as expected of the Billy Elliot star, but Williams' acting is what really made Jamie iconic. Williams brings soul and passion to the role and naturally embodies the strength and power of Jamie New.



While watching Jamie, it was easy to forget we were watching a piece of theatre, the emotional interactions between Jamie and his mother Margret (Amy Ellen Richardson), alongside the tense scenes between him and his father (Cameron Johnson) made you feel as if you were watching something real unfold in front of you.

Being different and choosing to love who you are

Something that stood out to me in this musical was the diversity and representation of minorities that may usually be ignored within the world of theatre. It discusses the discrimination faced by LGBT+ students, and is all about being different and choosing to love who you are. This representation was so important to me, as this kind of theme often takes a back seat in theatre.

To see a confident LGBT+ student learning to love himself is so important for younger members of the community



Contemporary and relevant

We also see multiple characters who are Muslim in faith and wear hijabs. This representation made the setting of a high school in Sheffield realistic and brought onto the stage stories that we may not have seen before. One of these students being Pritti Pasha (Sharan Phull), an unlikely leading lady. Pritti is shy, and we can see she often lives in the shadow of a flamboyant Jamie New, however we can see her intelligence throughout the show: she mentions that she wants to be a doctor when she leaves school.

Subtle lines were changed in this version of Jamie to fit a contemporary audience, including mentions of Covid-19. One girl called her classmate a 'Lateral Flow Test' because they are 'all up in [her] nose.' The set, made of moving school desks, which presented a pleasant level of simplicity to go along with the familiar school atmosphere. We also saw the set of Loco Chanel's drag shop, 'Victor's Secret'.

The musical numbers were flawlessly executed, and while the ballads from Richardson and Williams were unforgettable, the group performances are the most enjoyable moments. Jamie had energetic and sharp choreography in abundance!

Jamie includes many heart-warming messages about acceptance, identity, and friendship and is, overall, a celebration of being unique and loving who you are. The dancing, the bright costumes, and the continuous jokes are all a testament to that.