

# School of Rock: The kids steal the show

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Michael Woody Friday, October 05, 2018

REVIEW: There is much to enjoy about 'School of Rock: The Musical,' but it's the kids who steal the show.

Let's be honest, the enjoyment of most musical programs at elementary schools comes from the cuteness of the kids. Nobody ever leaves praising the musical ability on display. However, it would be a totally different case if the program featured the children cast in 'School of Rock: The Musical.' Though some are shorter than my waist, they possess more talent than is in my entire body. It is absolutely astounding to watch those who weren't born yet when the 2003 film was released play musical instruments better than some seasoned professionals. There is much to enjoy about 'School of Rock: The Musical,' but it's the kids who steal the show.

It's the dream of Dewey to be a beloved rock star, but he finds himself without a band and in desperate need of employment. By posing as his best friend, Dewey lands a gig as a substitute teacher at a high-class prep school. It's a hopeless, yet hilarious, situation for Dewey as he can't even correctly spell his name on the board, not to mention teach them anything. A dramatic turn is taken though, once he learns the students are musically gifted. It becomes Dewey's mission to turn the class into his bandmates and for them to compete at the Battle of the Bands.

Much credit is given to Merritt David James as Dewey, who makes the role his own, rather than being a caricature of Jack Black. He totally rocks in every aspect of his performance, from the vocals to the one liners. For much of the show, Dewey is the only adult on stage, (the term adult is used loosely), but he's still surrounded by very mature talent. In a way the children in 'School of Rock' is comparable to those in 'The Sound of Music,' but this is a very amped up version. Rather than 'Do-Re-Mi' they are learning the musical stylings of Black Sabbath and Motorhead. Prior to the show's opening is an announcement that the children really are playing their instruments. Otherwise it would never be believed. I don't even know how to download a song on iTunes, while Mystic Inscho as Zack (9 years old) is playing an electric guitar like Jimi Hendrix. I have T-shirts older than he is. Furthermore is Katie (Leanne Parks) on bass, who entertains with both her playing and stone-faced expressions. On keyboard is Theo Mitchell-Penner as Lawrence, who expertly tickles the ivories and the funny bone with some lines. The drummer is Freddy, played by Cameron Trueblood, whose nickname should be Sticks, if it's not already. Together they create a sound that's equal, if not better, than some rock bands on tour. That's not even all of them. There is Sammy Dell a Billy, whose flair for fashion makes him perfect as the bands stylist. Julian Brescia shines as Mason, in charge of lights and Jacob Moran is not to be messed with as chief of security. Special mention goes to Summer, (a.k.a. Hermione) played by Sami Bray, whose sharp tongue and tenacious attitude

earns her the job of band manager and a real standout amongst her peers. Last but certainly not least, is Grier Burke (Tomika) whose voice would be the top of any class. She has a flawless sound that is soothing to the soul. Burke's rendition of 'Amazing Grace' is a highlight and is powerful enough to make an atheist give praise.

It takes a tremendous talent to overshadow Lexie Dorsett Sharp, who plays Principal Mullins, but the children manage to do so. Rather than some extraordinary other life force, they make her appear to be merely human. Sharp's character is high strung and tightly wound, but in the scene where she's able to let loose puts her precious voice and pure beauty on full display. This is the third production in which Sharp has graced the Schuster Center stage after having previously appeared in 'Young Frankenstein' and 'The Addams Family.'

The talented cast perfectly complements the script, which in addition to many laughs also contains a lot of heart. Everything about the production is top notch, including the set design as every scene is seamlessly transitioned to the next.

On a different, but slightly related note, the Schuster Center is now selling roasted nuts in the lobby. My wife noticed the scent as soon as we entered, and we were all the way on the other side from the nuts. We enjoyed our purchase and I encourage you to patronize the roasted nuts, because they make my wife very happy.

Anyway, you would be nuts to miss 'School of Rock' as it's a show you don't want to be absent for. The '[School of Rock](#)' continues through October 7.

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## About Michael Woody

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Mike Woody is a life long resident of Dayton, and has a passion for writing, which is good because he doesn't excel at much of anything else, except eating.

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