



**'[Hot Stuff](#)' at [Oldham Coliseum Theatre](#)
Reviewed by [John Waterhouse](#) September 2015**

This re-working of the story of Faust is essentially a dynamic comedy musical, steeped in popular, mainly 1970's songs, following the story of Joe, a non-achiever who is offered a chance to sell his soul to the devil in return for winning a TV talent contest. If you are prone to allergic reactions to all aspects of 70's disco, punk and glam rock, this probably will not be your kind of show but '**Hot Stuff**' is a lot more than just Faust in platforms and glitter, never slacking in pace over two hours of good, solid, fun entertainment; a totally professional cast and band give their all, with great performances all round.

As soon as you walk into the auditorium, you are hit by a very impressive set which has been

well thought out, on first impression looking very much like a glitzy TV show setting but on second glance, there are echoes of the Hellish influences which underpin the story. A nice touch is that the main musicians, rather than being cooped-up together in a corner, are distributed evenly around the stage so that they remain an important visual part of the show, at times stepping out of the role of simply members of the band and engaging with the actors. This is an actor-musician show, where the cast themselves are not just all singers but play a range of other instruments including flute, sax, guitar and bongos. This gives a very contained image to the whole feel of the production.



'Hot Stuff' is very funny, principally held together by the two demonic characters, 'The Boss' (aka as the Devil) and his 'man', outrageous transvestite Lucy Fur, who both regularly break the fourth wall, bringing consistently ribald 70's humour to complement the music of the period. There are a number of very slick and funny surprises, at times superbly executed, mixed with camp comedy. It has to be said there is also a strong element of glamour, with great outfits and a huge amount of impressive costume changes. Alan French, as Lucy Fur, perhaps not

surprisingly, gives the most memorable performance, coming over as a sort of cross between Lily Savage, Danny La Rue and Frankie Howard (if you can imagine that!) but the Paul Duckworth's Gold-suited Devil provides an amusingly relaxed counter-weight, as he watches most of the proceedings from his office in hell.

Unlike some musicals that rely on well-know music, the songs and dialogue slip into each other with tremendous ease and there was only one noticeable pause as Joe's ditched girlfriend Julie, sympathetically played by Ibnabo Jack, nearly corpses before singing 'I will survive' during a bed scene. However, if anything, it's perhaps surprising there was not more of this because there was a real genuine connection between the actors and the audience, topped by a standing ovation at the end. The cast were clearly having a good time whilst delivering slick performances combined with tight choreography and spirited singing.

Benjamin Stratton plays a superbly gormless Joe, who is transformed into a cool glam rocker and then an angry punk. His homely girlfriend Julie is pushed to one side by the stunning and sexy Miss Hot Stuff, deliciously played by Abigail Climer, but Joe soon learns that pleasure and fame for their own sake, come at a price. Although the story is a familiar one and set in the 1970's, 'Hot Stuff' has a very contemporary message; just look at the obsessive interest of both the public and the media for shows like 'Britain's got talent' and 'The X Factor', where some contestant will seemingly do anything to achieve fame. It is interesting to note that 'Hot Stuff' was first performed twenty five years ago, premiering at Oldham Coliseum, before enjoying a run in the West End and two national tours. Director Kevin Shaw has taken full advantage to revise the whole show, with new ideas that fully exploit all the acting and musical talents at his disposal.

'Hot Stuff' is a fun night out and a hugely enjoyable show, with the cast and musicians clearly deserving the standing ovation at the end. The show runs at Oldham Coliseum until 26th September.