

February 8, 2008

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Theatre Review

Altar Boyz lampoons boy bands

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The intimate Drury Lane Theater has taken full advantage of its cozy setting once again in the staging of the Off-Broadway pop musical *Altar Boyz*. Just like the Drury Lane's previous production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Altar Boyz* involves audience interaction and thrives in a small atmosphere. Combining energetic dancing, dynamic acting and perfect singing, *Altar Boyz* will entertain every theatergoer.

Altar Boyz is a concert style show that parodies the boy band phenomenon by chronicling a male Christian boy band. The premise of the show is that the quintet, which includes one Jew, tours the country in hopes of saving sinners and Chicago is their last stop. Throughout the show, the members describe how the group was formed and perform religious pop songs in order to help save the souls of those in the audience.

Although *Altar Boyz* doesn't have a completely engaging plot, the hilarious characters and songs make for an entertaining show.

It would be easy for actors to poke too much fun at their characters. However, actors take their characters seriously. Brian Crum who plays, Mark, the flamboyant Christian who desperately tries to hide his feelings for his band mate Mathew (Devin DeSantis) has some of the most hilarious moments in the show. Every longing glance is hysterical, but never sarcastic. Luke (Tyler McGee), the bad boy, previously had a drug problem, which the group hilariously tries to hide.



While the music is upbeat and catchy, it isn't very memorable. However, the leading actors' voices and great harmonies make every song enjoyable.

Altar Boyz doesn't only rest on tired boy band clichés and Backstreet Boy caricatures; it is fresh with hilarious jabs at religion. However, *Altar Boyz* balances sarcasm with sweetness. There are no hurtful or derogatory remarks about religion.

The Drury Lane's size allows *Altar Boyz* actors to interact with the audience. Boy band members serenade girls, take audience members on stage and run through the aisles. The audience feels like part of the show each time the band checks its sin counter, which shows the amount of sinful people in the audience.

A downside to the intimacy of the Drury Lane is that anyone in the theater can see the sweat dripping off the actors. *Altar Boyz* is incredibly fast-paced. The group members are

put through a marathon of singing and dancing for the entire 90-minute production. The actors are constantly dancing and hilariously attempt to mirror the sexy moves that characterize a boy band. A live band adds to the high-energy performance.

Everything else in the play is sparse. All five male leads stay on stage for the entire show and no other characters make an appearance. The stage is sparsely decorated with a ramp and *Altar Boyz* sign. The four-member band at the center of the stage also becomes a main part of the show. This isn't a criticism; too much scenery would overwhelm the stage.

Although *Altar Boyz* can be enjoyable for what it is on the surface, it also tackles some issues that give it more meaning. Band mates struggle with trusting and accepting one another, which isn't easy with a Jewish member in the group. While the show is funny and entertaining, it is something one would only want to see once.