

Name of Company: Heckington Players ADS

The Quest for Lord Quibble's Custard

Venue: Streamed online

Directed by Laura Griffin

Produced and Written by Kei Bailey

Date of Review: Saturday 23rd January 2021

This weekend would normally have heralded the start of another epic panto run by this well established and popular village society. Sadly this was not to be, as is the case with all pantomimes unfortunately. Heckington Players though had the foresight last summer, when restrictions were slightly more forgiving, to put together their first ever film, to be released instead of their usual January offering.

We are accustomed of course to watching films with huge budgets and long production schedules with state of the art filming and post production editing. For an amateur group, used to live performance, to even think about tackling this genre takes massive courage and a real leap of faith. So Heckington Players are to be commended for even entertaining the idea, let alone pulling off an hour long feature. And there is much in this film they have achieved wonderfully.

Beginning with a cosy fireside chat from narrator Laura Griffin, who moves the action along, with well timed and clear storytelling, we know straight away that we are in for a magical treat.

It becomes clear through the film that this is a true ensemble piece, with so many members of the group taking part. And its also clear they are thoroughly enjoying themselves.

A great deal of work went into this film. The costumes especially are stunning – well designed and created, without exception. The attention to detail is particularly pleasing. Hand in hand with the costuming, is the wonderful make up. Whilst on stage this is seen by most of the audience from a distance, here we see it close up, in all its wonderful detail. I especially loved the black nostrils of the baddies.

Its difficult to pick out particular performances as everyone has their characterisations spot on. From Queen Rancidium, Flossie the Gnome, Dunknuckle, Muggoob, Bonecruncher Guzzleguts and Mud-ra to Griselda, Clawsprocket and Scrattner. What an array of wild and whacky characters from the group's writer Kei Bailey. And, alongside all the regular established actors, it's lovely to see cameo performances from people you wouldn't usually see on stage, not least of whom is Mark Elsom who is usually kept busy as Technical Director for the group's stage based extravaganzas.

The end credits state that the film is based in our lovely County of Lincolnshire and one thing it does so well is to show off our fantastic coastal landscape, our inland green fields,

big skies and waterways to such wonderful effect. I loved the cinematography. Well done indeed.

Recording sound, especially outside, can be so very difficult. Background traffic noises at Dunmoanin' Cottage and wind buffeting the microphones in a windswept field does not detract unduly from the story and must have been a constant headache for the technical team both during and post production.

There are some very accomplished technical effects in the film, including the spell effects from Agatha's wand, the magical powers of Neville the goldfish and the witches' magic mirror. I particularly enjoyed the transitions between scenes.

The credits and editing of the film has been very professionally done by Callum Thursby and adds so much to the production.

Dan Excell's Tree Song is particularly impressive and its well worth watching the video of this alone on the Players' facebook page.

Its lovely to see that one element of Heckington Players' pantos especially makes it into the film. Their panto gags have not been put away entirely until next year. My favourites? 'Where's your grammar?', 'She's stood in your garden next to the fishpond.' And 'What do garden gnomes call piles of frog poo?' (you'll have to watch the film to answer that one).

So well done to the Players for managing to put together something for their audience this year, despite everything. Director Laura Griffin, Writer and Producer Kei Bailey and indeed the whole team are to be warmly congratulated.

And lets hope it won't be too long before the whole team can tread the boards again.

Andrew Key

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