

# Our *Bat Boy*

Laurier Musical Theatre presents chiropteran incest at its bloodthirsty best and triumphs

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CORD A&E

*Bat Boy: The Musical* has nothing to do with either Batman or baseball. This year's production by the Laurier Musical Theatre, put on over the course of this past weekend, had a simple plot: a "bat boy" is found in a cave and scares the bejeezus out of the townsfolk of a small mountain-side hamlet.

The county veterinarian's kindly wife and daughter adopt Bat Boy. Bat Boy becomes civilized (in a *My Fair Lady*-esque, single-song scene), while at the same time the town is afflicted with cattle-raising problems and the deaths of the Taylor children. With such tragedies, the townsfolk need a scapegoat, and the vampire teeth and Vulcan ears of Bat Boy are too good to pass up. So, they get their guns and go looking for Bat Boy, who has run off with the vet's daughter.

Throw a dark family secret into the mix and you get a cult favourite, liberally peppered with a wide variety of rock-musical styled songs, classic one-liners, and merciless parodies of classic musicals like *Rent*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *The Lion King*.

On the other hand, although the musical is charming and fun, *Bat Boy* is not fated for eternal glory. Apart from solid music and lyrics, the occasional memorable one-liner and its general quirkiness, the show hasn't got much going

for it. The humour is campy and sophomoric, and gets old real fast. The descent into the plot's surprisingly dark interior is somewhat ludicrous, as is the ending, which leaves the audience wondering if it wasn't just the quickest way to get out of the hole.

Still, *Bat Boy* is a fun show and very well put on by Laurier's Musical Theatre company. The cast members all contributed good performances, especially by Jodi Jahnke (Mrs. Parker, the vet's wife) and Tammy Whetham (Shelley, the vet's love-struck daughter), who blew everyone away with their excellent musical performances, especially in "Three Bedroom House". Clara Hilts proved to the world that she is truly "black on the inside" with her soulful illustration of Reverend Billy Hightower, and Mark Ross portrayed the gleefully maleficent-but-hurting-on-the-inside Dr. Parker to great effect.

The star of the show, Bat Boy himself, was played by Ken Aldridge, whose wonderful acting and Gollum-meets-Yoda impression balanced out the many wonderfully out-of-tune solo moments.

The choreography was fun, especially for the "Children, Children" number, featuring Jon Krohn as Pan, as well as what must have been the entire company in outrageous animal costumes essentially having a mock orgy onstage. Props to Laura Killeen, the choreographer, and, while props are being distributed,



Shawn Porter

**HOLD ME BAT BOY** - Laurier's own Bat Boy, Ken Aldridge, shows that even a guy with pointy ears and a tendency to drink blood can find the woman of his dreams, as long as she is his sister.

to lighting designer Chris Knarr and stage managers Michelle Lutz and Sarah Erdman.

Also worthy of mention is the uber-fantastic pit band led by Brendan Whiting (who looked as though he was having more fun than anyone else during the course of the show) and featuring Laura McGuire on keyboards, Dan Beacock on guitar, Beth Curley on bass and Daniel MacPherson on drums.

Distinctive highlights of the musical include the many hick jokes, Roy-the-rancher's mullet;

the "voices in Dr. Parker's head" which resembled little more than a cross between rampaging monks and a photo-negative of the KKK; the phrase "Sa-WEET wounded Jesus!" the slaughterhouse prop's message: "Rick + Your Mom"; Mrs. Taylor's similarity to Yzma from "The Emperor's New Groove"; the cow head, and a baby Bat Boy being hoisted away by bats.

Some lowlights of the show include the faulty mics of Dr. Parker, the questionable tuning of Bat Boy, Rick and the Company, and the way

(in big, dramatic moments) that the clarity of the lyrics got sacrificed in favour of volume.

These mishaps did very little, however, to the general excellence of the performance.

Laurier Musical Theatre is a campus club at WLU that grew out of the 2003/2004 on-campus production of *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical*. In the years following, LMT has produced the musicals *Fame* (2005) and *Urinetown* (2006), as well as multiple renditions of *Cabaret*.