



Review

What a delight awaits audiences to the Criterion Theatre with this crazy "doo-wop" style sci-fi musical that dates back to early rock'n'roll via a minor detour around Guys and Dolls.

The Little Shop started as an off-Broadway production back in 1982 and must have influenced the slightly later Return To The Forbidden Planet with its colourful cast of multi-talented characters and on-set house band.

I absolutely loved so many of the roles, especially Rebecca Fenlon's Audrey in her tight, 'tasteful' dresses and teetering high heels. Chris Smith was also perfect as hapless Seymour, the flower-shop assistant who breeds a plant with rather unusual feeding requirements.

Gardeners will know all about the unsavoury-sounding benefits of fish, blood and bone as a fertiliser. Well, it seems Seymour's plant can live without the fish and bone. And despite seeing Jon Elves in just about everything this year, I honestly didn't recognise him when he first emerged on stage as Orin, the biker dentist with sadistic tendencies. What a gift of a part for Jon - he's obviously relishing every excruciating minute.

On the "doo-wop" front I also really loved the chorus, Jan Nightingale, Anne-Marie Greene and Nicole Firth, especially their opening numbers, as the down and outs gathered on Skid Row - well directed and an imaginative set.

John Fenner also proved he had a fine and tuneful pair of lungs in his part while the unseen John Ruscoe produced a bellow to be reckoned with.

I'm told musicals are notoriously hard to get right with sound levels. And my only slight criticism of this joyous and totally un-festive offering, is that it was sometimes hard to hear some of the comic lyrics.

But this whole show is such a scream it really doesn't matter. Grab tickets if there are any left.

Barbara Goulden



