

# Revamp is this show's best friend

## We Will Rock You

★★★ (out of 4)

Written & directed by Ben Elton. Songs by Queen. At the Panasonic Theatre, 651 Yonge St. 416-872-1212

**RICHARD OUZOUNIAN**  
THEATRE CRITIC

If you liked it before, you'll love it now.

*We Will Rock You* opened last night at the Panasonic Theatre in a new leaner, meaner version that put the music and performers right in front, which is where they've always belonged.

In order to fit a space less than half the size of the production's original home at the Canon Theatre, the cast has been shrunk and the scenery largely scrapped. That doesn't mean, however, that there's nothing to look at.

Production designer Mark Fisher has found new ways to suggest things with a pleasing minimalism, and the overall framing structure of lighting trusses gives the whole thing a rock concert feel that's definitely welcome.

Fisher's witty costumes also remain and Willie Williams's lighting seems even punchier than ever.

There were some serious sound troubles, however, on opening night, which led to the show stopping dead in its tracks for 10 minutes halfway through Act I.

It's the kind of unfortunate accident that only happens once in a blue moon and the cast worked like crazy to get the momentum going again.

They were aided by writer-director Ben Elton's trimming of the show's script to help things move

along more easily. What he did worked so well, I can only suggest that he do even more of it the next time around.

If you didn't like the show before, you'll probably dislike it less in the new venue, because the cheesy overblown feel of the original production is largely gone and the likeable cast are given more prominence.

Yvan Pedneault has grown considerably in the leading role of Galileo, with all his old charm and a lot of new confidence. He looks, sounds and acts like a young Bruce Springsteen, which is no crime.

Erica Peck continues to have a good time as Scaramouche but has learned to give added dimension to the character, resulting in even more laughs.

Alana Bridgewater has gotten

much sassier and saltier as the Killer Queen, using an Islands dialect to great effect and rocking the hell out of her numbers, while Adam Brazier makes a perfect sinister sidekick as Khashoggi, dispensing smarm by the bucket.

Valerie Stanois is an awesome Oz, with lungs of leather, sex appeal for days and a real command of the stage, while Sterling Jarvis plays off her nicely as Duff, with big muscles, big voice and a big heart.

And Jack Langedijk wraps it all up perfectly as Pop, the freeze-dried stoned-out essence of every old hippie you've ever encountered.

Jason Jestadt energetically leads the white-hot orchestra, which is given much more prominence this time, which is just fine.

A good time just got even better. Check it out in its new home.