

North Essex Theatre Guild
Full Length Drama Festival
Brantham Amateur Theatrical Society

Bunkered

By

Lynn Brittney

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Introduction

The action of the play takes place in the operations room of a Cold War Bunker long forgotten by the Ministry of Defence but still staffed by Naval personnel who maintain the monitoring equipment and draw their pay month after month.

All goes well until H.Q. intercept a message for the “decommissioned” bunker and the Marines arrive!

Front of House

A friendly welcome from the FOH staff with allocated seats and a near full house, the programme was nicely printed with cast and crew credits.

Set

A very solid set with a sliding door, painted battleship grey that gave the stark appearance of the room being deep underground, with monitoring equipment stage right and the walls covered in charts of coastal waters. Government posters adding to the overall effect of a working monitoring station.

I was pleased to see that the front tabs were not used, this gives the audience time to look at the set and take in all the various bits and pieces of stage dressing.

Costumes

Great care was taken with the costume plot including the Naval uniforms of the Bunker Personnel, the Army Fatigues worn by the Marines, and the Wedding Dress worn or rather modelled by Peter!

Sound and Lighting

The lighting worked well in this production it being used to denote the end of one scene and the beginning of the next, red warning lights were also used to great effect, there was no sign of shadows quite difficult to obtain with a plain grey set.

The sound engineer had a lot to do with various warning sirens and telephone conversations but I did find the female voice was at times a little indistinct.

I really liked the introduction music it gave quite an eerie feel to the production and added to the atmosphere.

Properties

Well done to Lisa and Rosemary a fantastic collection of properties from manuals, tools, electric wire, storm lantern to mention but a few of the enormous props list.

The two guns the Marines carried looked very realistic, I can only assume that they weren't real!

Acting

Peter

Playing the straight man of the piece as the Chief Petty Officer who is trying his best to keep the operations centre running, Richard looked and acted the CPO very much, apart from his initial entrance with Harry, Peter was always in the background. However, I did feel that more should have been made of the comic situations that the character found himself in.

Harry

Keith playing the ageing hippy had a large very wordy part. He looked and sounded like a man who in his younger days was a bit of a rebel but had now calmed down to just being an anarchist when it suited him. Whilst everything was very solid in his performance I felt that his line delivery needed to be speeded up a little to get the comedy out of the character.

Joan

Another massive wordy part, Val very much looked the part of a WREN but I did feel that she was a little hesitant with her lines at times which tended to slow down the pace of the production.

Mags

I loved this little character struggling with her niece's wedding dress, a rather put-upon person I felt that Pauline was the only character who managed to get the funniness out of the first scenes of the play.

Taylor

Wow! Sophie came on to the stage with a blast and out came the humour of the production.

Sophie, and Mark, lifted the show from being rather slow to a full “in your face” comedy not only with the power in her voice but also with the on-stage business.

The actions between Connor and Taylor were a joy to watch.

A great performance well done!

Connor

The other half of this hilarious duo Mark played it full on, extracting all the fun he could from the part. Connor starts off as a disciplined officer, then turns into a nervous wreck and then must be restrained by Taylor, this created a very lively piece of entertainment.

Bill

Gordon has the most wonderful facial expressions that allow him just to stand and command the stage, quite a difficult thing to do whilst carrying the deceased Sid Co!

Coming in from his “sick bed” dressed in overcoat and pyjamas looking quite sorry for himself this was a lovely controlled comic performance.

Shelton

Commodore Shelton another straight part who tidies up the play’s plot, this was very well played by Lesley, confidently explaining how the MOD could get out of the problem of the “oversight” and negotiate the sale of the Bunker to its current personnel.

Direction

A play of “two halves” I felt that up to the end of act one scene two that the play lacked any sort of true comedic feel with the dialogue a little tentative in places. It wasn’t until the two marines appeared that the play gathered pace and we enjoyed the comedy antics and dialogue that should have been there earlier. I rather felt that this was the fault of the play rather than the direction.

A great deal of care was taken with the costumes set and properties which gave feeling of the faded Naval Personnel and the ultra-smart Marines.

Michael Poole