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Christmas Actually Brisbane Review @ La Boite Theatre

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- Friday, 29 November 2019 15:53. Published in [Arts News](#)

It's the most wonderful time of the year, and The Little Red Company's 'Christmas Actually' production is the perfect way to celebrate the festive season.

Back after a sell-out season in 2018, 'Christmas Actually' is back for a 12-show run at La Boite Theatre before heading south for six performances at the Sydney Opera House.

Starring Queensland's vocal powerhouse Naomi Price ('The Voice Australia', 'Lady Beale'), 'Christmas Actually' is a love letter to the much-loved movie soundtrack of the 2003 British Christmas-themed romantic comedy 'Love Actually', with a hearty sprinkling of comedy and charm thrown in for good measure.

Delivering all the hits from the beloved holiday classic movie, the production (written by Price and Adam Brunes) seamlessly incorporates iconic elements and scenes from the movie into the show. Audio of Price reciting the movie's opening monologue opens the show, the poignant note card scene is delivered by Price (with a personal touch) under falling snow, and much to the audience's delight, Alex Rathgeber ('The Wizard Of Oz The Musical') roams throughout the Roundhouse Theatre re-enacting Hugh Grant's infamous dance sequence to The Pointer Sisters' infectious hit 'Jump (For My Love)'.

Audience participation is on point, with Price hilariously schooling a sheepish audience member who has never seen 'Love Actually' on the history and plot of the movie. Interludes between songs are peppered with witty conversation from Price, who revels in making cheeky digs at the latest royal scandal surrounding the disgraced Prince Andrew.

Supporting Naomi on stage are backup singers Stefanie Caccamo ('HAIR The Musical Australia'), Tom Oliver ('VELVET') and Alex Rathgeber, and a four-piece band comprised of Mik Easterman (drums), Scott French (guitar), OJ Newcomb (bass) and Michael Manikus (keyboard).

While Price may be the leading lady, each vocalist is given moments to shine, and shine they do. Caccamo, who Price touts as the next "big thing", sends a chill up my spine with her rendition of Dido's 'Here With Me', Rathgeber deliver The Beach Boys' 'God Only Knows' with aplomb, and Oliver channels Elvis in a bluesy cover of 'White Christmas'.

The magicians too have their moment in the spotlight, with French treating the audience to a beautiful instrumental intro to Fleetwood Mac's 'Songbird', and Manikus playing a stirring intro to Joni Mitchell's 'Both Sides Now'.

An exuberant Christmas carol medley sees the cast imitating the stars of the annual televised 'Carols By Candlelight', with Price channelling Rhonda Burchmore in 'Santa Clause Is Coming To Town', Caccamo hitting Marina Prior's high notes in 'Have Yourself A Merry

Little Christmas' and Rathgeber impersonating David Campbell in 'Last Christmas'.

The closing song and pièce de résistance is of course Price belting out Mariah Carey's high rotation yuletide hit 'All I Want For Christmas Is You', which has audience members on their feet merrily singing and dancing along with gusto.

If you love all things Christmas and are a fan of 'Love Actually', oh come all ye faithful to 'Christmas Actually'.

★★★★★