

# TheatreLife Review – Made in Dagenham

I've been lucky enough to see Made in Dagenham several times, and it remains one of my favourite shows. As an Essex girl, the story never fails to give me goosebumps – these women made such a huge impact on history.

Leading the cast was Keeley Denman as Rita O'Grady. She really grew into the role, capturing the struggle of fighting for change at the cost of her marriage and family life. Her voice suited the part beautifully, and her acting brought real depth to the character. Overall, Keeley gave a truly outstanding performance. Opposite her, Oli Budino was a nice match as husband Eddie. He played the balance between partner and father well, and his chemistry with Keeley and the children felt natural and believable.

The factory girls all held their characters brilliantly – from sexy Sandra to ballsy Beryl. I particularly enjoyed Sophie Lewis's portrayal of Clare; she struck just the right note of simplicity while keeping the character sympathetic rather than foolish.

Caroline Escott gave a powerful performance as Connie. However, I felt her big solo number, though sung with great skill by Caroline, was undermined by the unnecessary "business" happening in the Berni Inn scene from the company. The constant movement behind her, in her spotlight was distracting and took away from what should have been her moment to shine.

The same issue cropped up in the school scene between Rita and Mr Buckton where extra background activity from the school kids pulled focus. Sometimes, less really is more.

David Slater was excellent as Harold Wilson, capturing the character with spot-on comic timing. Robyn Gowers also impressed as Barbara Castle, clearly having studied the role to deliver a strong, assured performance.

Jonathan Davies brought to life the pompous Ford General Manager, Mr Hopkins, while Joanne Davies gave an effective performance as his overlooked and belittled wife, Lisa. Michael Lambert was perfectly cast as the brash, hard-edged American Tooley, delivering just the right amount of menace as the show's antagonist.

The company delivered every number with great energy, making excellent use of the set and the stairs to add height and visual interest. Under the baton of Clare Benson, the band produced a rich sound that supported the cast beautifully.

The costumes captured the era perfectly and contributed greatly to the overall polish and high standard of the production.

Director Claire Carr's creative choice to incorporate video, photographs, and newspaper articles from 1968 at the finale was truly inspired, grounding the production in its historical reality and reminding us that this is not just a story – but history brought to life.

