

# British Theatre Guide

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## Rock of Ages

Book by Chris D'Arienzo

Brooks Atkinson Theatre, New York

(2010)

*Rock of Ages* is the least pretentious show on Broadway. The fact that it lacks sophistication and depth should be pretty clear for all to see but if not, the narrator actually tells us so.

This is a jukebox musical that affectionately pokes fun at the hairy rockers of the 80s and in doing so, allows their fans to enjoy the music and a few laughs for 2½ hours.

The atmosphere is determinedly rock concert with salesmen in the aisles pushing beer throughout, aided by an overheated auditorium and what looks suspiciously like product placement on stage.

Either way, Beowulf Boritt has done a nice job of recreating the sleaziness of LA's Sunset Strip in his colourful design, making room for the very good 3 guitar and a drum kit band and the performers, with projections adding colour and sometimes a little drama.

The plot has all of the sophistication of a Heavy Metal ballad. Boy (innocent wannabe rocker) meets girl (innocent wannabe actress), boy falls out with girl over her one night stand with rock star, much angst, happy ending.

In the background, a couple of German property developers try to demolish the Strip and good guy Dennis's bar, while both hero and heroine briefly sell their souls to different devils.

So why would anyone want to pay good money to see *Rock of Ages*? Some would argue that they shouldn't. In reality, the music is great, the dancing raunchy enough to attract old rockers. As a bonus, leading actor Constantine Maroulis was a finalist on *American Idol*, which if the UK equivalents are anything to go by, is a serious draw.

Maroulis acts passably and sings well, getting good support from his leading lady Kerry Butler, Mitchell Jarvis playing the kangaroo-hopping, deliberately irritating narrator Lonnie and the excellent Adam Dannheisser, who cannot quite hide his bass-baritone or acting skills, clearly honed in a very different milieu.

This may all sound patronising, and the show is arguably uninventive and exploitative, but it is not intended to be entirely negative.

For those that enjoy music from this era, the show has tremendous energy and, while rarely requiring the brain to move into even second gear, many of the attractions of a rock concert except that you can actually see the performers in the (lots of) flesh.

*Rock of Ages* will therefore have a long and happy life, possibly cloned around the globe. As a result, the producers and creative team will not care if some turn their noses up at their baby.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)