

Review: Billionaire Boy

By Suzanne Cleave

***Billionaire Boy* at Theatre Royal Plymouth**

If you've ever read one of David Walliams' many books, you know you are in for a treat when you get tickets to see one on stage.

Billionaire Boy, currently on a nationwide tour and at Theatre Royal Plymouth until Sunday, did not disappoint!

This is the third of Walliams' books to receive a toe-tapping stage adaptation, and follows the story of Joe Spud, a young lad who seems to have everything – a big house, all the toys he could dream of and plenty of money – but all he really wants is a friend.

At the start we are introduced to Joe's dad, Len Spud, who has made his millions developing BumFresh, a revolutionary toilet roll that's moist on one side and dry on the other – “an idea that would revolutionise wiping bottoms!” For Joe's birthday, his dad writes him out a very large cheque, but all Joe longs for is a present chosen by his dad, like the old days, and some time with him.

But Len has also lost his way, after his wife left him for Joe's scout master, he's been frittering his money on women, helicopters and a dodgy array of wigs!

When Joe starts his journey at the local comprehensive, he sees it as a new start, and keeps his wealthy background a secret from his new school mates. But after his dad arrives at school in his helicopter to bring Joe his homework, both Spud men start to learn that money can't buy you happiness.

Billionaire has a small but solid cast, led by Matthew Gordon who transforms himself into the lonely 12-year-old, and Matthew Mellalieu as Joe's dad. A lot of the laughs are provided by the smaller characters – Raj, the eager newsagent (played by Tuhin Chisti), always ready to serve up a new deal to his customers, and Mrs Trafe the school dinner lady (played excellently by Emma Matthews) whose dishes of hedgehog cake, beaver bake and frog mayonnaise is enough to put you off school dinners for life!

Jacqueline Trousdale has worked her magic on the set, which transforms seamlessly from BumFresh Towers to the school, with cupboards and doors that open much like pages of a book to take the audience to the next location.

It's a heart-warming story, with catchy songs galore, and there's a moral undertone that when the Spuds hit rock bottom, they realise they have everything they need.