

The Bloody Ballad of Bette Davis review



“Ensemble piece with no weak links”

REVIEWS AUG 11, 2026 09:55 BY PAUL VALE ASSEMBLY ROXY, EDINBURGH



Annie Meek Montgomery, Aaron Novak, Coleson Berlin, Laura Dillman Frank and Grace Olinsky in The Bloody Ballad of Bette Davis at Assembly Roxy, Edinburgh. Photo: Vas Eli

Perfectly bonkers new Bette Davis musical that puts the OC into occult

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In 1985 BD Hyman wrote a damning book about life with her mother Bette Davis. It didn’t go down well and Hyman was disinherited, retiring to Virginia to found a prayer colony, while Davis carried on working until her death four years later. In an interview, Hyman claimed that her mother practised witchcraft and once transformed into a clawed, satanic figure.

From this nugget of madness, writer John P McEneny and composer Rob Parker have created this marvellously batty slice of musical theatre. Directed by McEneny, *The Bloody Ballad of Bette Davis* from Brooklyn-based company Piper Theatre Productions is a camp 1970s horror story that imagines Davis using witchcraft to even out her later career. Cross *The Brady Bunch* with *Rosemary’s Baby* and you’re in the right territory. In this case truth might well be stranger than fiction, but the



Paul Vale

Paul has been writing for The Stage since 1995 as a critic and feature writer. He is also part of The Stage’s Edinburgh Fringe review team.

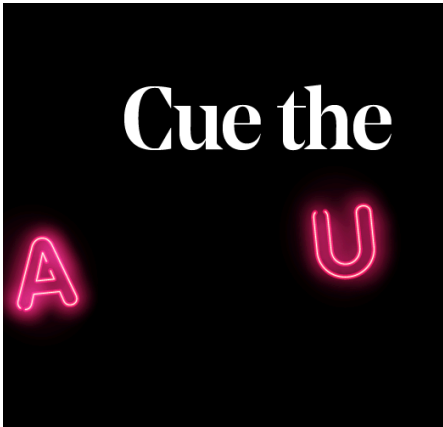


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As crazy as this might seem, it actually works really well, thanks to some lively original musical numbers and a company of performers totally committed to McEneny’s zany directorial choices. The musical is framed in a daytime TV chat-show format, complete with a puppet chorus and overly sincere presenters. Parker does manage to sneak in a potted history of Davis’ career, but performed in song by Don (Coleson Berlin), Bette’s acolyte, who’s spilling the beans on his former boss.

Annie Meek Montgomery makes a fine showing as Davis, cigarette permanently in hand, but this is an ensemble piece with no weak links and a sound design by Parker, which means every one of his clever lyrics is heard.

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Production Details

Production name	The Bloody Ballad of Bette Davis
Venue	Assembly Roxy
Location	Edinburgh
Starts	06/08/2026
Ends	30/08/2026
Running time	1hr
Composer	Rob Parker
Book writer	John P McEneny
Lyricist	Rob Parker
Director	John P McEneny
Musical director	Rob Parker
Set designer	Eric Sicard
Lighting designer	Rob Parker
Sound designer	Rob Parker

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Cast includes	Annie Meek Montgomery, Aaron Novak, Coleson Berlin, Laura Dillman Frank, Grace Olinsky
Production manager	Justine McLaughlin
Producer	Piper Theatre Productions

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