



The Story Behind the Production

by writer Jon Conway

David Essex has always had an ambition to present a theatre show based around his music. In 2005 he was touring in *Boogie Nights 2 – This Time Its The 80s*, which I had written and he asked me if I could look at developing something for him.

Previous to *Boogie Nights 2*, I had been associated with his Christmas musical pantomime *Robinson Crusoe* and remarkably in 1974 I had been part of *Augusto's Circus*, which featured in David's London Palladium show. This show also introduced Barbara Dickson and Hot Gossip! I was a young teenager when our little circus was used as a speciality act whilst David sung.... *All The Fun Of The Fair*.

So, my first thought, especially given David's association and my background, was to create a show set on a fairground. I believed the notion to be romantic, with interesting characters that fits his music and has never been done since *Carouse!*

So David gave me about 80 songs to listen to, including many album tracks as well as his known hits and I spent a week playing them all. Unlike many 'catalogue' musicals, I realised that so many of his songs have a storyline and theatricality in their arrangement.

I had been aware of some of the motivation David had in writing some of his songs originally and included these events in the storyline. It can be a bit tricky taking someone's art and re arranging it in a different context, especially since some of it had quite personal associations. A short time later David came round to my house and I nervously read him the story and played him excerpts of the songs in the new context I had placed them in.

I think David was quite surprised and actually rather moved by the story and immediately just said simply 'Yes, let's do it.'

Nothing is quite so simple though, for just a short time later Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber personally asked David if he would headline the revival of *Aspects Of Love*. David's relationship with Sir Andrew goes back a long way, as he had been the original voice of Che Guevara that helped launch *Evita*.

So David agreed to tour *Aspects* whilst we honed *All The Fun Of The Fair*. David has personally had an input on every page and line of script along with our talented director, Nikolai Foster. Anyway, here we are now, ready to open in Bromley in September 2008 and then visit 25 theatres on a nationwide tour through until May 2009.

As well as the hits you know, such as *Winters Tale*, *Hold Me Close*, *Gonna Make You A Star*, *Rock On*, *Me and My Girl* *Nightclubbing* and *Silver Dream Machine*, there are some great album tracks like *Pretty Thing*, *He Noticed Me*, *Here We Are All Together*, *If I Could* and my personal favourite *Dangerous*. There are a few others that David and his musical associate Ian Wherry have adapted specially for the show. Of course, David is not be singing all the songs himself, as many will be performed by the other characters in the show.

The story is quite contemporary and deals with subjects not always addressed in theatre, but so relevant to everyday life. It deals with oncoming middle age as seen by a divorcee and a widower, who wonder if romance will ever come their way again. Both have teenage children (and the problems they bring) to deal with. Whilst these themes occur in everyday life, our characters have to face them whilst running a travelling fair and the stigma that still exists in communities that see them as outsiders.

However, there is lots of fun too! All the characters possess a sense of humour that you would expect with all the fun of the fair. Of course, a fairground of all places is also associated with music. Most still play heady 70s rock, in fact many fairgrounds still play many of David's hits as you waltz on a waltzer and bump a dodgem, as we found when researching the show. We believe the show is really exciting with a fresh novel story in an unusual setting, but with the comfort of so many great hit songs.

So roll on up get your tickets, for all the fun of the fair!