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## Long Live Queen!

*We Will Rock You* honours iconic rock band.

By Sarah B. Hood

Sometimes a rock band is just a rock band, and sometimes it's a way of life. Queen definitely falls into the latter category. What Canadian kid can forget the summer of 1975, when the band's startlingly original "Bohemian Rhapsody" was suddenly everywhere on the radio? The mock-operatic performance soon morphed into one of the earliest music videos, and turned the album *A Night at the Opera* into a huge seller. It remains one of the most popular hit singles of all time.

Those of us lucky enough to have scored tickets to the full-on live rock experience of Freddie Mercury and the boys at venues like the Montreal Forum (where I saw them in the '70s), were privileged to be part of history. As our heroes belted out hit after hit, with the earth-shaking accompaniment of the crowd stamping and clapping along to rock-music battle cries like "We Will Rock You", Queen fans knew we were part of something special.

So maybe it wasn't such a surprise in 1991 when Freddie Mercury announced that he had AIDS, dying the very next day; we all knew that champions of this ilk belong to a golden age that's doomed to pass. Like Achilles and Hector, Arthur and Galahad, Freddie Mercury was a character too large for life, and destined to leave it early; not for him the slow fade into double-chinned middle age, hair loss and gradual decrepitude. Freddie Mercury died a hero and a legend.

All this to say that, with the current popularity of the so-called "jukebox musicals" like *Mamma Mia!* (based on the songs of ABBA), *Movin' Out* (Billy Joel), *All Shook Up* (Elvis) and *Good Vibrations* (the Beach Boys), it's a miracle that no one has yet produced a show using classic Queen repertoire. Until now. *We Will Rock You*, created by former Queen band members Brian May and Roger Taylor with Ben Elton, has already seen a successful UK run, and is now opening here in Toronto.

"It has gone through a bit of a metamorphosis and changed a bit," says Jack Langedijk, who plays Pops, a grandfatherly figure who assists a group of young rebels to win freedom from a tyrannical Big-Brother style dictatorship.

"It takes place in 2307 when Globalsoft Corp. takes over the world, and no one is allowed to have a musical instrument anymore," says Langedijk. "And there's this rebellion; a librarian find this tape of Queen and they discover that Queen had buried their guitars, hoping one day they would be found again."

At Langedijk's final audition, he faced the ex-Queen members who are working on the show. "You really feel that now they appreciate what they had, and they're celebrating it," he says.

And is "Bohemian Rhapsody" part of the show? Get your lighters ready: it's part of the curtain call!

Mirvish Productions presents *We Will Rock You* at The Canon Theatre in previews from March 14, opening April 10 for an indefinite run. For tickets, call TicketKing at 416-872-1212 or toll-free at 1-800-461-3333, or visit [www.wewillrockyou.ca](http://www.wewillrockyou.ca).