

Review: Sunny Afternoon – The Music of The Kinks*****



I'm too young to remember the early part of the 1960s – honest, guvn'r – but I do enjoy some of the music from that decade. Some of The Beatles' early stuff was, in my opinion, not particularly brilliant (I Want to Hold Your Hand, indeed...) although I did enjoy some of the Fab Four's later efforts, ironically as the end of the band was on the horizon. My personal favourites from the first half of the decade were The Rolling Stones, The Who – and The Kinks. So when the hit musical 'Sunny Afternoon' – based on the music of The Kinks – rolled into Edinburgh this week, I just simply had to go along.

The musical, as you might expect, is based on an original story by the band's lead singer – Ray Davies – and, naturally, tells the story of the rise, fall and rise again of one of the most influential bands in the UK in the 1960s. Davies is played by Danny Horn and the story begins with Ray and his brother Dave – brilliantly portrayed by Oliver Hoare plodding away in a rather bland outfit with the lead singer resembling something from the big band era of the 1950s. Spotted by a 'couple of Tory boys' managers– to quote from the show – the brothers and their friends are soon on their way to stardom.

Trashing the sound system to create the edgy chords of 'You Really Got Me' is recreated on stage (although legend has it that Ray got the unique sound by cutting the strings of his bass guitar and sticking them back together again) The brilliance of this song, finely recreated on stage, saw The Kinks establish themselves as one of the country's leading rock bands.

Inevitably, there are setbacks along the way. Ray has to marry at an early stage when he fathers a child – it was the done thing in the 1960s – but this doesn't stop the band's rise to the top. What does throw a spanner in the works is when The Kinks try to 'conquer the USA'. Ray refuses to comply with the strict rules regarding paying union dues, leading to a memorable line about being the only socialist band to fall foul of the unions.

The boys return to England and Ray suffers a breakdown. The band look to be down on their luck but Ray recovers, starts writing more superb songs and the resurrection is complete. If you love The Kinks you will lap up songs such as You Really Got Me, Dedicated Follower of Fashion, Well-Respected Man, Till the End of the Day and, of course, Sunny Afternoon. The show draws to a conclusion with Lola and the audience, mostly avid Kinks aficionados, simply loved it.

For a great evening's entertainment and a blast from the past, head to the Edinburgh Playhouse – Sunny Afternoon is on until this Saturday. Ticket details [here](#).

Edinburgh Reporter review ****