

Review: Jersey Boys *****

My grandchildren, bless the little blighters, refer to the time when I was their age as 'the black and white days'. My eldest grandson reaches 14 years of age in a few weeks. One of the hazy memories I have of when I was 14 was of dancing at the school disco (it was the 1970s) One of the first songs I danced to was December '63 (Oh What a Night)

Now, more than 40 years later, that same song resonated once again as I watched Jersey Boys – a musical based on the story of the Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons – at the Edinburgh Playhouse.

The show begins at the beginning of the swinging 1960s and is the story of how four young lads with musical talent from New Jersey in the USA would become one of the biggest and most popular pop bands of that decade – and beyond. However, don't be fooled by the Four Seasons initial clean cut image. As the story demonstrates, the foursome endure struggles with arguments, fights and even prison in an almost cliched tale of sex and rock and roll. The show tells their story over the ensuing decades, a story of success, debts, relationships and tragedy.

What underlines their remarkable story, however, is the steadfast loyalty the boys show to each other, through thick and thin – even when one of the band walks out vowing never to return...

While I can't say I was ever a huge fan of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons, Jersey Boys is worth seeing. Like the best of these shows, the story moves swiftly, and this is perhaps what the audience want – they want to hear those songs that are part of their lives and which bring back so many memories. In this respect the show doesn't disappoint. 'Sherry', 'Walk Like A Man', 'Big Girls Don't Cry', 'Can't Take My Eyes Off You' and, of course 'December 1963 (Oh What a Night)' soon had the audience tapping their feet. The early part of the show also includes some lesser known songs which are every bit as good as the big hits.



Some of the cast of The Jersey Boys

The production is top notch and there are some striking visual effects, based on the industrial architecture of New Jersey and the impressive use of light adds to the atmosphere of the show.

The cast are quite superb. Michael Watson has the role of Frankie Valli and he gives an astonishingly powerful performance. If you close your eyes you might think it's actually Frankie on the stage. Simon Bailey plays the cheeky chappy role of Tommy Devito and it is Devito's sometimes-reckless attitude that leads to spiralling debts and threatens the band. There are also fine performances from Declan Egan as Bob Gaudio and Lewis Griffiths as Nick Massi.

With over 30 songs brilliantly performed by a sterling energetic cast, Jersey Boys is a hugely enjoyable show. A wee word of warning, though. If your

emotions are prone to
get the better of you it's advisable to take a packet of
tissues for the second
act!

The show is on
until the weekend after next and you're guaranteed a night to
remember – oh, what
a night!

Jersey Boys is on at the Edinburgh Playhouse from until
Saturday 2 March 2019. Tickets [here](#)

Edinburgh Reporter review: *****