

Jersey Boys marks musical revival

Oh, what a night

First review

CATHERINE LAMBERT

THE big men with an even bigger sound came to town last night with a hit musical about Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons.

The catalogue of hits the 1960s group produced would be enough for an entertaining show, but *Jersey Boys* goes further with a fascinating storyline, strong choreography and a brilliant script.

The combination of timeless great music, finely drawn characters and a funny, at times tragic, story, makes it a theatrical triumph.

It is so much more than a jukebox musical and in a class of its own.

By show's end the cast is familiar and likable with their *Sopranos* style, honour, toughness and loyalty.

They have an endearing self-awareness that makes for some of the funniest lines.

Handshakes, though, are deadly serious in *Jersey* with Valli and songwriter Bob Gaudio famously never signing a contract, opting to shake on it instead.

The show moves at a cracking pace, recreating 1960s America and particularly Jersey where a group of boys sang under a street lamp for fun, never dreaming they could go on to form a harmony quartet and gain entry to the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame 40 years later.

The show charts the highs of finding their own sound and topping the charts along with the lows of debt and depleted family life, leading to tragedy in Valli's case.

The cast may not be well known yet, but members will be after this show.

Frontman Bobby Fox not only has command over the challenging and famous Valli-style falsetto, he makes it his while also portraying the different shades in Valli's character and adding some strong dance moves as well.

He is a charismatic star who could not have sung *Can't Take My Eyes Off You*, *My Eyes Adored You* and *Sherry* more perfectly.

It may not be a family show because the broad Jersey language is authentic, but it's the perfect couples, friends and date show — and everyone leaves the theatre humming.



Big hit: Action from the *Jersey Boys* premiere last night. **Left:** Eye von Eibra and Tottie Goldsmith shimmer on the red carpet. **Below:** Matt Welsh and Lauren Newton. **Right:** Travis Cloke and Bethany Taylor.

Pictures: JULIE KIRIACOUDIS, CHRIS SCOTT

