

Teenage Kicks

Grease, at the Corn Exchange, from Wednesday October 2 to Saturday October 5

As the lights came up on Rydell High School reunion on Saturday evening, there was a palpable sense of excitement in the Corn Exchange auditorium. The Nomads certainly didn't let us down, delivering a show that was pure greased lightning.

Grease needs little introduction. Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey's tale of high school relationships and angst, richly interwoven with music and magic from the late 1950's, has been a hit film and seen numerous professional tours.

The Nomad's production exuded energy from the moment the suitably staid reunion gave way to the *Alma Mater Parody* and Summer Nights, with a strong line-up of principals and well-drilled chorus of 'students' and 'teachers' quickly capturing the mood of the period.

For me the highlights were the excellent solos, expertly backed by musical director Nic Cope and his band (sensibly positioned behind the cast to improve the sound balance). It was good to see some newcomers in the limelight, with Neil Padgen as Doody offering an excellent version of *Those Magic Changes* and Ellie Maskell handily Marty's song, *Freddy My Love*, with impressive soulfulness. Other high spots were provided by Holly Lucas (Rizzo), who showed great versatility in the contrasting styles of her two big numbers, and the joyous *Mooning*, with Matt Collins and Ellie Selby as Roger and Jan. But it was *Beauty School Drop Out* that drew the biggest response from the audience, with an ethereal Stuart Honey as Teen Angel demonstrating his vocal range surrounded by a chorus of angels in white tunics and silver curlers.

Ann Buckley provided a nice cameo as headteacher Miss Lynch, Shaun Blake captured the hearts of the audience as the hapless Eugene, and Victoria Gill as Patty battled hysterically (a little too hysterically at times) to keep the school on the straight and narrow. Then there was Alison Hoults' energetic Cha Cha, Kate Leek's adorable Frenchy, Andy Pocock's self-assured Kenickie and James Pascall-Smith's swaggering Sonny.

But in the end, Grease is a show about a boy and a girl, and Jon Lovell as Danny was perfectly matched with Sasha Robaczynski's Sandy, both performers showing their dramatic flair and vocal strength throughout the emotional rollercoaster of a performance. Congratulations too to Sasha for choreographing the show; it was great to see the principals and chorus enthusiastically engaged in the company numbers.

With Mike Scott-Cound and team working seamlessly backstage, this was a highly successful production for director Jeanette Maskell and producer Nikki Harrison.

MARK LILLYCROP