

Nomads' house of fun

October 2011 at the Corn Exchange

Show keeps Madness music as lively as it was 30 years ago

Tim Firth's musical proved to be an excellent platform for Nomads' principals in this production which follows a string of successes for the Newbury society.

A clash of cymbals began the story - and you had to have your wits about you to pick up what was happening. It was Joe Casey's 16th birthday and leaving the most colourful, liveliest party ever, Joe breaks into a building site with girlfriend Sarah.

When the police pursue him dual storylines begin with the action alternatively following Bad Joe, who abandons Sarah and runs away and Good Joe who 'fesses up and gets sent to 'a correctional establishment'.

When Good Joe comes out he has a very difficult time, while his bad counterpart goes from bad to worse. Eventually, Good Joe and his Mum are reunited and he gets the girl as well.

As Joe, Richard George followed his superb performance as Gaston last year with an even better one. He was absolutely right for this difficult part as was the excellent Claire Bowden in the role of his girlfriend Sarah. Their duet *It Must Be Love* was beautifully touching in contrast to the rumbustious Madness numbers which were SUCH fun, as Miranda Hart's mum would say.

Baggy Trousers, *Wings of a Dove* and the title song *Our House*, the big manic numbers, were executed with precision and an energy which rattled around the Corn Exchange. By contrast was the grim relentless, meticulous marching by grey prisoners in *Tomorrow's Just Another Day*.

Congratulations to choreographer Claire Bowden for wielding the rehearsal whip over her fellow actors - they didn't let her down.

There were good performances everywhere, but Jon Lovell, Aiden Strickland, Sasha Robaczynski, Kate Leek, Mike Scott-Cound and that great mover Holly Lucas all deserve far more praise than I have room for, as well as the whole company for the sheer oomph and joy they poured into their movement.

Then there are the folk who have the vision to put it together - director Amanda Maskell, producer Daniel Maskell and Nic Cope whose musicians kept Madness' music as lively as it was 30 years ago.

Another good job done by the Nomads team.

CAROLINE FRANKLIN