

Sparkling Showtime

Audience take their café seats as NOMADS serve up the entertainment

Newbury Nomads: Showtime Café 2010, at the Corn Exchange, from Thursday, April 22 to Saturday April 24

When Amanda and Daniel Maskell decided to try something different, the idea of a Showtime Café was born. A clever concept, it is one that can only work if the available talent is good enough. Fortunately, NOMADS had no problems and produced an evening packed with enjoyment for audience and performers.

Red-aproned waiters chatted to the audience as they took their seats, for the stage had become a purple and red café, with tables occupied throughout and mini-performances going on constantly in the background. First-rate acting from everyone. The excellent Daniel Maskell and Samantha Buckley were café owners, snapping at each other, as the customers, singly or in groups, sang of their lives. In between, the café's normal business was carried on with chat and laughter, linking the music almost imperceptibly. And speaking of the music...

Sam Buckley shone both as the bustling overworked owner and singing Take Me Or Leave Me. A great opening number from the whole cast was followed by cohesive unison singing from Russell Barrett and Neil Harvey bemoaning One Rock and Roll Too Many. Lively Sasha Robaszynski and Holly Lucas made a good job of showing how to be Popular and Stuart and Pam Honey's Dammit, Janet, kept the audience smiling, as did that fun group of schoolgirls.

An exuberant Time Warp from the company started the second act in which the highlight was Neil Harvey and Pippy Wiseman's Love Changes Everything, Neil's warmly musical voice complementing those wonderfully easy high notes from Pippy. One or two other singers lacked her confidence when it came to the upper notes. Just go for it, you'll get there.

One gripe. The old hat double-entendre phone call didn't fit happily with the rest of the evening - please bin it. What with red basques, a hilarious spot reminiscent of the Keystone Cops with a short-skirted Stuart Honey being 'robbed' by the hooded Shaun Blake, the constant interplay between customers and waiters, this was a whizzball of an evening giving everybody on and off stage a jolly good time.

Congratulations to MD Jevan Johnson-Booth and her musicians and to Daniel and Amanda Maskell for producing, choreographing and writing it all. This café provided a feast of entertainment.

CAROLINE FRANKLIN