

## **A towering inferno**

**Newbury Nomads all fired up for devilish disco, but how do they top that?**

**Newbury Nomads: Disco Inferno, at The Corn Exchange, from Wednesday, October 1 to Saturday, October 4**

Look up 'brilliant' in the dictionary; you'll find words like 'shining', 'radiant', 'dazzling', 'sparkling'. This Newbury Nomads' production was brilliant.

Set in the colourful 1970s, when girls who could wear bum-high skirts and those who couldn't opted for flared trousers, as did the lads in their high-heeled, clompy shoes, Disco had tunes which make people want to sing along - and they did.

The story of wannabe popstar Jack, who sells his soul to Lady Marmalade to achieve his ambitions, is a show that demands good principals, meticulous choreography (no problem with Jeannette Maskell in charge), an imaginative production team (director Amanda Maskell and producer Daniel Maskell) and a set of musicians (led here by Nic Cope) who can capture the liveliness of the all-consuming music which creates the atmosphere. The Nomads have them all, along with the knack of attracting members of a younger age group than many societies nationwide.

What a lot of rehearsing must have gone into making it all seem so effortless. The large chorus was consistently bright, cheerful and accurate, while the dynamic, committed dancers added flamboyance (just don't forget to smile, girls).

The Village People medley number was infectiously happy as ever, ending with that arm-waving YMCA, led by Jon Lovell (Terry) turning in another good performance.

Tim Clarke was excellent as Jack, not only musically, though I suspect his voice was suffering on Friday following the matinee, but in making the most of the dialogue - often crisply funny one-liners - as did Shaun Blake, playing his chum Tom.

Shaun's solos, 'Kissin' in the Back Row' and 'Some Girls', were splendidly performed with an enthusiastic 'boots and all' musicality.

The girls matched the guys in talent led by Samantha Buckley as girlfriend Jane, her lovely mellow voice turning raunchily determined for that female vow 'I Will Survive' and Claire Bowden was superbly chockfull of temptation as the devil's sidekick, Lady Marmalade, men in the audience no doubt drooling as she and the girls turned the temperature up with 'Hot Stuff'. Excellent performances, too, from Alice Billington (Maggie), Stuart Honey (Heathcliffe), Russell Barrett (Duke) and Juliet Clarke (Kathy) plus Daniel Maskell as a wonderfully psychedelic Nick Diablo.

The Nomads have one problem - how to top it with their next show. This was vibrant, classy entertainment.

CAROLINE FRANKLIN