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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2006

Jersey Boys *** 1/2

Everything went wrong that could go wrong. I opened up my Playbill and there was a snowfall of notices announcing replacements. Two of the four Jersey Boys were out, and the guy who played their manager. But John Lloyd Young was there and that would be the only deal-breaker since he plays Frankie Valli and he's the one I want to see before the original cast is gone. So I stay. Then the first number begins and the mikes give out. The show is delayed for 25 minutes while they try to fix the audio. And even after they start, throughout the performance there are brief moments when people's mikes don't work at all or only haphazardly. Then the couple next to me -- who've seen the show twice already -- start chatting during several songs as if they're watching TV at home. And despite all of this I thought the show was very good. The book is very substantial, unlike most jukebox musicals. And as others have pointed out, they use the music wisely. The struggling guys of act one sing all sorts of popular numbers in clubs and so on, but the Four Seasons hits are only heard in bits and pieces until 3/4s of the way through when they finally dig into the catalog and it's a terrific release of tension. Young is exceptional as Valli, somehow capturing the spirit of that falsetto without ever seeming to resort to imitation or karaoke. It's gonna make a GREAT movie someday; I just hope they don't wait so long that Young can't take part.

POSTED BY MICHAEL IN NEW YORK AT 4:38 PM



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