

**Reading Operatic Society**  
**"DISCO INFERNO"**

**Saturday 18th September 2010**

**Hexagon Theatre, Reading**

Report by: **Henry Hawes - NODA Representative - Area 13**

On Saturday 18th September 2010, I was pleased to be invited in my capacity as your NODA Rep to review your latest production "**Disco Inferno**" having seen it on Wednesday 15th September when I was escort to the NODA President and the London NODA Councillor I must admit that I thoroughly enjoyed both performances. It was good to hear the songs from the 70's which I knew very well and which I suppose dates me, but who cares! This show swept the audience along on a toe-tapping ride of nostalgia and how they loved it, as I did. It was lively and energetic and revealed some excellent singing and dancing by the company. This show had been well staged and obviously well rehearsed with some excellent characterisations being brought out. When I first heard that Reading had selected this show I did have certain reservations regarding their ability to do it, as I felt that it was probably outside their 'Comfort Zone', *how wrong could one be!*

Congratulations to all concerned in this production , a highly successful show.

**Damian Sollesse - (JACK FLASH)** - I have watched Damian develop over the years and he has always given his total commitment to any part he has played, but this was a 'tour de force' performance and to me was one of the best things I have seen him do. His characterisation was 'Jack Flash', from his humble beginnings as a sweeper in the night-club to his 'stardom' and eventual disillusionment, all these aspects were brilliantly presented. His characterisation, movement, singing and athleticism were brilliant - Congratulations.

**Louise Woods - (JANE)** - As 'Jack's' long-suffering girlfriend, Louise's portrayal could not have been bettered, her feelings towards 'Jack' was well portrayed bringing out all the emotion necessary. She looked good on stage displaying the necessary facial expressions and presented a good singing voice with a well sung 'I Will Survive' - Well done.

**Adam Butler - (TOM)** - As 'Jack's' lifelong friend who was a 'bit of a nerd' Adam got the characterisation spot-on, his unresolved sexual activity with his girlfriend 'Maggie' could not have been bettered and caused quite a few chuckles along the way. His singing and description in the number 'Kissing In The Back Row' was well put over and deserved the applause it got - Well done.

**Jenni Simmonds - (MAGGIE)** - This was another excellent characterisation in the production. As the girlfriend of 'Tom', Jenni certainly ensured that she kept 'Tom' dancing on a string, much to his frustration. Her one number in the show 'I Love To Love' was very well sung - A well presented part.

**Joshua Young - (HEATHCLIFFE)** - This was quite a powerful performance of 'Heathcliffe' by Joshua, it had all the necessary braggadocio as one would expect from this character. His feelings towards 'Jack Flash' who usurped him, was well displayed, as was his relationship with his girlfriend 'Kathy'. His vocals were powerful and came to the fore in the number 'Leader of the Gang'.

**Caroline Carragher - (KATHY)** - As the long-suffering girlfriend of 'Heathcliffe' Caroline was excellent, her eventual disillusionment towards him was well portrayed. Here we had good movement and facial expressions so you were left in no doubt of her character and her feelings. Vocally, Catherine's singing of 'Streetlife' was a show stopper for me - Congratulations

**Oliver Kyte - (TERRY)** - This was one of the smaller roles in the production as the smooth talking disc-jockey and friend of 'Jack' and 'Tom', but Oliver gave just the right interpretation of the character - A nicely crafted part.

**Kevin Gingell** - (DUKE) - As the owner of the night-club, Kevin showed the necessary authority but at the same time he also displayed his feelings towards 'Jack' and his eventual dislike of 'Heathcliffe'. I think this is probably the biggest part I have seen Kevin play and he carried off the character very well. As an 'aging rocker' you could certainly teach the youngsters a thing or two!!

**Maria Lukeman** - (LADY MARMALADE) - I liked this interpretation by Maria, displaying what I call, aggressive sexuality. Her dealings with 'Jack Flash' was well portrayed and I could understand why he fell under her spell. Her musical numbers were well put over displaying a good singing voice.

**Adrian Tang** - (NICK DIABLO) - The interpretation of this role by Adrian was spot-on. His movements, facial expressions and manner could not be faulted - A good interpretation.

**Paul Jones** - (LILY) - This cameo role of the 'Camp Barman' by Paul was hilarious, only a small part but it certainly had impact every time he appeared.

### **Fallen Angels**

**Samantha Fields, Anna Jennings, Charlotte Partlow & Georgia Yurkwich-Spink** - As the acolyte's of 'Lady Marmalade'. The sexuality displayed by these four complimented 'Lady Marmalade's' aggressive style so that we had a good contrast between them. I could not fault these four who were excellent throughout the performance.

**Disco Inferno Dancers, Screaming Fans, Kids in the Cinema Etc:-** This group excelled themselves, entering fully into the spirit of this production and in particular the dance routines which were energetic and precise. Each and everyone adopted the various characterisations called for giving a good interpretation of each one. Movement, singing and dancing was all of a high order - Well done.

**David Parsonson** - (DIRECTOR) - I could not fault the direction, it had been well cast and all the principals had been well characterised in their various roles. The movement of the cast on the Hexagon stage was good, particularly when one considers the energetic dance routines. I gained the impression that the whole cast displayed a joy of performing and which certainly came across to the audience - Well done.

**Mark Pizer** - (MUSICAL DIRECTOR) - Musically this show was well served by the eight excellent musicians under the baton of **Mark Pizer** - they played the music in the disco style of the 1970's which certainly got the toes tapping in the audience. Both principals and chorus had been well rehearsed in the music and all gave excellent performances - Overall this was a good theatrical experience.

**Scott Jenkins** - (CHOREOGRAPHER) - The choreography for this show, devised by Scott Jenkins was brilliant, it had pace, and precise movement, the sort of dance routines I have not seen from Reading Operatic before and I would imagine that a lot of hard work had been put into this aspect, and did it show - Congratulations.

**Stage Manager & Crew** - This appeared a well managed stage with the crew working hard ensuring that scene changes were swift and silent, no easy task with some 29 scene changes.

**Lighting Design & Crew** - This was an effective lighting design which ensured the right atmosphere was generated in the numerous scenes.

**Lighting & Sound by the Hexagon** - The control of the lights by the Hexagon staff could not be faulted with well picked up cues - I was also impressed with the sound control (for a change). It was well balanced and well cued.

**Costumes** - A good selection of costumes from various suppliers, they were colourful, seemed to fit well the various characters and represented the 1970's period.

**Scenery** - The scenery by Scenic Projects did nothing to enhance this show, it looked old and tired which was a shame as it could have detracted from the performance, at least it didn't overshadow the performers.

**Properties** - All properties that were used had been well researched and fitted the action on stage.

**Make-up** - Nothing I could fault with the make-up, it captured the 70's period ,had been well applied and stood up well under the stage lights.

**Programme** - This was a colourful programme with an eye catching cover. It had been well laid out with all the necessary information, all printed on good quality paper.

**Front of House Staff** - As usual, excellent Front of House Staff, friendly, helpful and welcoming.

Thank you for the invitation and your excellent hospitality.  
With best wishes for your future efforts.

*Henry*

Henry Hawes - NODA Representative - Area 13 - London Region.