



Audrey Linden
Hollywood Theater Examiner

Feel Frank Sinatra's "Old Black Magic" in "Hoboken to Hollywood"

"Hoboken to Hollywood" Gives Us Frank Sinatra's "Old Black Magic"

At the Theatre With Audrey Linden
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Sinatra fans are in for a treat with this dynamic and nostalgic musical at the Edgemar Center for the Arts. Luca Ellis, who bears a strong resemblance to a young George Clooney, Paul Litteral, and Jeremy Aldridge created this "Journey Through the Great American Songbook." And, what a wonderful journey it is. You'll be "Swinging on a Star" with "Stardust in Your Eyes."

Jeremy Aldridge, the original director of the long running "Louis and Keely Live at the Sahara" won the L.A. Drama Critics Circle Award and the Garland Award. Trumpeter, Paul Litteral was the musical director for the musicals Geffen Playhouse run. When the show moved to the El Portal Theatre, Luca Ellis was featured as the Sinatra crooner. The three collaborated on this vehicle for the dangerously handsome Ellis. He is not a Frank Sinatra impersonator; rather, he embodies Sinatra's smooth sound and signature phrasing. I closed my eyes, and the rich crooner sound was, undeniable, "Old Blue Eyes." I had chills running down my spine.

James W. Thompson's set is a realistic t.v. studio sound stage. "Go to one." As the audience, we are watching the taping of Frank Sinatra's television special complete with the familiar two camera set up and two large screens hanging from the ceiling. I loved the attention to detail with the big lit up "applause" signs which flashed at the end of the songs.

Al Bernstein's hyper, edgy director is all Hollywood as he rushes between the sound booth and the stage. Pat Towne's nerdy and timid assistant, Andy, provides the comedic relief. Towne does a very convincing job as the somewhat insecure and inept assistant director. Jeff Markgraff's Nelson Riddle conducts the superb 12 piece Paul Litteral Orchestra as he transports us to another era.

In Act One, we get to see the notorious Sinatra flash of temper as he blows up at the timid Andy. "This show is about me and my music; not some mish mash." Expletives and threats follow as Sinatra exits. It was so appropriate to follow that with "You're Nobody Til Somebody Loves You" after Sinatra forgives the shaken Andy and ends up giving him a pep talk. "Don't waste your time being scared." This pep talk works magic on Andy.

There are commercial breaks with film footage of the 1965 Mustang, which sold new for the outrageous price of \$2,350. The old Timex commercials, re-named "Shimex" are woven in between with Markgraff's Nelson, Franci Montgomery's platinum blonde bimbo, Darlene, and Chandler Hill's mellifluous Harry Vonzel type announcer.

There is a surprise at the end as Andy, under Sinatra's tutelage, steps out of his own shadow. Some of the famous Sinatra songs include "Bye Bye Blackbird", "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm", "Old Black Magic", "Blue Moon", "That's Life", etc. Ellis asks the audience to call out some favorites for his encore. Ours was "My Way." You won't want to miss this journey with Luca Ellis as crooner Frank Sinatra singing twenty of your favorite songs.