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## Hoboken to Hollywood; Swooning is Back!

By Laurel Belgreen

“Hoboken to Hollywood” is more, better, and beyond. Touted as “A New Musical Event” and “A Journey through the Great American Songbook,” you might expect a good show and a pleasant evening of musical standards. It is more than a terrific show, better than other current shows, and well beyond the promises of the promotion.



Luca Ellis and the Paul Litteral Orchestra.  
Photo Credit: James W. Thompson

The entire cast is splendid (special acknowledgment goes to Al Bernstein, Pat Towne, and Jeff Markgraff) and the 12-piece Paul Litteral Orchestra is great. The set, the staging and the pacing of the musical numbers blending into the plot are perfect. It’s a magnificent production.

By “A New Musical Event,” the promoters mean an innovative, audience-interactive experience that magically transports you to a TV studio in the mid-1960s and treats you to the filming of a TV Special starring Frank Sinatra. You feel privileged to have a private peak at the “real” Sinatra – his cool personality, warm generosity, and hot temper. If you are from his generation, mature enough to have seen one of those TV Specials, you know why he had the reputation of being “cool” and why young women swooned when he sang. If you are a bit younger and know only the legend of “the crooner,” you might not understand why he was famous and favored. This play shows you. It also explains the expression “He plays Sinatra better than Sinatra did.” If that doesn’t make sense to you, you haven’t seen Luca Ellis perform as Sinatra. Sinatra was known as being handsome, sexy and a marvelous singer. Luca Ellis is much more handsome, much sexier, and earns the nickname The Voice. Swoon! If you’ve seen old clips of Sinatra and asked yourself why the women were swooning, and thought they were very silly for doing so, see Mr. Ellis perform. You’ll not only understand; if you are a woman, you just might swoon!

Here’s the great surprise of the show: it’s for every age. Sure, for anyone who remembers Sinatra, it’s a fabulous journey of memories – but for audience members too young to wonder about Ol’ Blue Eyes, Mr. Ellis’ talent is so gigantic it doesn’t matter. For the purposes of this production, he’s a terrific actor and remarkable singer believably portraying a charismatic performer, and it doesn’t matter that the character really did exist and was famous. A voice that touches your soul never goes out of style and a stage presence that exudes romantic sensuality will always be prized. Just as Sinatra’s fans loved him for his unique qualities, audiences too young to make the comparison will fall in love with Mr. Ellis for his talents and gifts.

Some day (soon, based on this show!), Mr. Ellis will be famous as himself and will be officially recognized as The Sexiest Man on the Planet. In the meantime, see him in “Hoboken to Hollywood” – at the Edgemar Center of the Arts through December 12 – in one of his last steps before he reaches full stardom. It’s okay if you swoon.



Chandler Hill (left), Al Bernstein  
Photo Credit: James W. Thompson