

Oh what a night!

Jersey Boys is an almost flawless polished power-ride of music and story-telling



The Four Seasons quartet Emmanuel Castis as Nick, Grant Almirall as Frankie, Kenneth Meyer as Bob and Daniel Buys as Tommy. INSET: The girls have a moment to shine.

Jersey Boys
Teatro at Montecasino
Until April 28

JENNY DE KLERK

GATHER together all the superlatives you can find and chuck them at this show – they’ll stick.

Jersey Boys is a polished power-ride of music and story-telling that is just about flawless; as tightly knit as the unique sound that rocketed four youngsters from New Jersey to the top of the world charts in the Sixties and Seventies.

It’s obviously tough being a Jersey Boy, hailing from a dirt-poor ghetto of crime, sex and

scams. When street tough Tommy DeVito takes young Frankie Valli under his wing, he teaches him a lot more than B flat.

But the music comes first and with young Frankie’s falsetto and effortless range Tommy knows he has a winner, if he can find the right name and the right mix.

Enter Bob Gaudio, another super-talented teen, and the Four Seasons are born – and how!

The Teatro stage erupts with hit after hit – *Sherry*, *Big Girls Don’t Cry*, *Walk Like a Man* – and the audience goes wild. These are the South African boys, but the sound is there, from the falsetto to the bass, and the moves are crisply choreographed and as sharp as the knife-edged creases on their smart trousers.

And that’s only the beginning. The hits keep coming – *My Eyes Adored You*, *Oh What a Night*, *Dawn* – and the narration moves from Tommy to Bob to bass player Nick Massi... we feel the tensions building and the approach of doom, too much, too soon.

The set is simple but versatile, with props, mikes, tables and chairs appearing and disappearing like magic. An overhead gantry becomes a poignant statement as, one after another, the key characters in Frankie’s life cross it and disappear... “Bye, bye, Baby”.

The Four Seasons dissolve, but the music goes on. “You can be a solo, Frankie,” says Bob. “You and that horn section...”

It happens with the song that no one would touch, that Bob fought

to get on air – a lovely piece of theatre with chairs and desks whizzing into place as Bob marches from office to office.

Then it comes, as the gleaming brass horn section marches on, the beautiful *Can’t Take My Eyes Off You*, and Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons takes off.

Grant Almirall is stupendous as Frankie in voice, moves and acting, taking him from the kid, to the lover, the friend, the father, the leader, the performer.

Kenneth Meyer, baby-faced as Bob; Daniel Buys, cocky as Tommy; Emmanuel Castis, both tough and vulnerable as Nick... all are rounded, nuanced and perfectly cast.

Then come the rest of the 19-member cast in a multitude of

polished and convincing roles, with and without instruments. The three girls – Carmen Pretorius, Taryn-Lee Hudson and Kirsten Murphy Rossiter – have their own moment to shine individually and as a supporting girl band, picking up all the female roles.

And don’t forget the 10-piece orchestra, led by Rowan Bakker, the music supervised by Bryan Schimmel.

Jersey Boys is slick, it’s fast, it’s utterly gripping and utterly satisfying. At the end the audience erupted, their enthusiasm obviously taking even the cast by surprise... “*Oh, What a Night!*”

● *Jersey Boys* is at Montecasino until April 28, then opens at Artscape in Cape Town on June 19.