

‘Jersey Boys’ Can’t Escape Its Broadway Roots

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 21, 2014 - 6:17am

- [Broadway](#) [2]
- [Christopher Walken](#) [3]
- [Clint Eastwood](#) [4]
- [Erich Bergen](#) [5]
- [Frankie Valli](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Jersey Boys](#) [8]
- [John Lloyd Young](#) [9]
- [Michael Lomenda](#) [10]
- [Movie Review](#) [11]
- [Sherry Baby](#) [12]
- [Spike Walters](#) [13]
- [The Four Seasons](#) [14]
- [Vincent Piazza](#) [15]
- [Warner Bros.](#) [16]



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Director Clint Eastwood’s “Jersey Boys” suffers from the same inherent fundamental flaw in all of these so-called Jukebox Musicals – their stories are mere afterthoughts. You come for the songs, and suffer through the story. They have the narrative equivalent of chicken wire and chewing gum, patchwork filler to tie the songs together. Although not as insufferable as “Mamma Mia,” “Jersey Boys” story is still pretty thin gruel to make a movie out of – and that’s a shame because it certainly starts out promisingly enough.

The film begins as a sort of “Goodfellas” lite with mobbed up gofer Tommy DeVito (Vincent Piazza from “Boardwalk Empire”). He’s from the wrong side of the tracks in Jersey stuck running errands for local mob boss (Christopher Walken) while playing two bit gigs with his musical group. Piazza frequently breaks the fourth wall and talks directly to the camera – like a young Robert De Niro – while relating the group’s early beginnings. Like everyone else he’s looking for a way out and he sees that in the young Frankie Valli (John Lloyd Young in the role he originated on Broadway) and his unforgettable voice. That voice will be the group’s ticket to fame and fortune, but things don’t really take off until they add songwriter Bob Gaudio (Erich Bergen) to give the group the hits they need to climb up the charts. Gaudio comes up with hit after hit, while the film indulges in a few “how’d they come up with that?” musical biopic clichés.



In Studio: The Four Seasons Start Recording in ‘Jersey Boys’

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Eastwood isn't usually thought of as musical type- unless you count "Paint Your Wagon" and the two time Oscar winner would surely rather we just forget about that one. But he makes the film look glorious; infusing it with a real period style that seems stained in tobacco smoke. His eye for cinema shines brightest in a sequence at Manhattan's famous Brill building. It's a place where musical dreams are made. He treats it like an old Hollywood studio, where stars bump into each other in the halls and a hit happens behind every door.

But once those hits start rolling in, the film's real narrative troubles start. This could have been a good biopic with a couple of songs thrown in. But instead Eastwood sticks to the Broadway script (by "Jersey Boys" Broadway team of Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice) a little too closely.

The story gets less and less time to make way for the songs. The characters flatten out and get all the depth of a cardboard cutout, while the story increasingly relies on a sort of cinematic shorthand. There are mob clichés, fiery Italian family clichés, unscrupulous music industry types and so on and so forth. You've also got a power struggle in the band between former ringleader DeVito, and the real brains of the operation Gaudio (who is saddled with one of the poorest looking fake beards to appear in a major motion picture in quite some time).

Meanwhile, Valli is constantly out on the road leaving his wife (Renee Marino) to drink herself into a stupor with the kids at home back in Jersey. But nothing is allowed to breathe. It all feels perfunctory and rushed like it came out of a Italian script-o-matic – right down to the "goomaras" on the sly and the violent argument which features lots of yelling and some broken dishes for no other reason than simply because dishes usually get broken in movies like these.



On Top: (l-r) Erich Bergen, John Lloyd Young, Vincent Piazza and Michael Lomenda in 'Jersey Boys'

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

It wraps up with a tacked on coda at the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame which features all Four Seasons in some of the worst old man makeup since Eastwood slathered Armie Hammer in pancake batter in "J.Edgar."

The story of Frankie Valli offers the building blocks of an entertaining trip down memory lane. As it stands it's a musical making a half-hearted attempt at being a biopic – but it never gets a chance to tell its story because those songs won't get out of the way.

"Jersey Boys" opens everywhere on June 20th. Featuring John Lloyd Young, Erich Bergen, Michael Lomenda, Vincent Piazza and Christopher Walken, Screenplay by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, from their musical book. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Rated "R"



[17]

By [SPIKE WALTERS](#) [18]

Contributor

HollywoodChicago.com

spike@hollywoodchicago.com [17]

© 2014 Spike Walters, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Mar 29 2024 - 3:34am):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/24160/jersey-boys-can-t-escape-its-broadway-roots>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/broadway>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/christopher-walken>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/clint-eastwood>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/erich-bergen>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/frankie-valli>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/jersey-boys>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/john-lloyd-young>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/michael-lomenda>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sherry-baby>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/spike-walters>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/the-four-seasons>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/vincent-piazza>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/warner-bros>
- [17] <mailto:spike@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#SPIKE>