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Oh Boy!!! Outstanding “Buddy Holly Story” at Forestburgh Playhouse

Review by Carol Montana

FORESTBURGH, NY (July 28, 2011) – Oh Boy, Oh Boy, Oh Boy !!! Forestburgh Playhouse has another hit on its hands. And this one rocks the roof right off the playhouse.

It’s “Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story,” and it’s dynamic and clever and inspiring and fun!



The show stars Todd Meredith as the quintessential Buddy Holly, and the very talented Bill Morey and Kyle Axman as Joe B Mauldin and Jerry Allison, a.k.a. The Crickets.

Written by Alan Jones, the play chronicles Buddy's start in Lubbock, TX as a country & western singer who is really a rock & roller at heart.

A DJ friend, Hipockets Duncan, played by Dustin Smith with twang and sparkle, gets Buddy and the Crickets a contract with Decca Records, warning them that "Decca is a country label." Inevitably perhaps, there is a parting of ways, as Buddy tells the Decca officials

"My music, my way."

Duncan comes to the rescue and introduces Buddy to record producer Norman Petty, played by the marvelous Kevin Confoy, who lets Buddy do it his way. Petty becomes the group's recording engineer, manager and producer. In a series of short vignettes, assisted by his wife Vi on piano (portrayed by the gifted Meggan Herod), Petty helps the group turn out a string of hits including "That'll Be the Day," "Everyday," "It's So Easy," and "Peggy Sue" (the naming of which is a funny and cute little scene).

Next stop is an exhilarating and hysterical scene at the Apollo Theatre where the Apollo Performers – the very talented Galyana Castillo and Ron King – are expecting a black group to arrive. Panicking, the Crickets are almost unable to perform until Buddy says "we sound black" and the first-ever white group to play the Apollo is a resounding success. The scene includes several clever uses of audience participation. (Really, the audience was just aching to help out anyway!)

The final number in Act I is an exhilarating performance of "Oh Boy" featuring Buddy Holly and the Crickets and all the Apollo Performers.

In New York City, Buddy meets record producer Murray Deutsch (the irrepressible Norman Duttweiler in a funny cameo) and Deutsch's secretary, Maria Elena (played by the delightful Ariana Sepulveda). Buddy falls instantly in love with Maria Elena and marries her, serenading his new wife with the beautiful and tender "True Love Ways."



Tempers run high at that point, leading to a break-up with the Crickets and Buddy going solo with a new manager.

On a tour during the 1959 "Winter Dance Party," Buddy performs with the hot and steamy Richie Valens (the super-talented David Marmanillo), J.P. Richardson a.k.a. The Big Bopper, played by the very versatile Max Nussbaum, and a host of other musical groups.

As with every other scene in this show, the Dance Party is filled with skilled musicians and singers, and features exquisite harmonies, fine choreography and toe-tapping, hand-clapping music including: "Why Do



Fools Fall in Love," "Chantilly Lace," "Maybe Baby" and "La Bamba."

The show winds down to a tear-inducing inevitable and tragic conclusion, but is topped off with several encores that revive the inspiration and the fun.

One of the best things about The Buddy Holly Story at Forestburgh is that everyone onstage is a musician. All the singers are first class, and all the musicians are really playing their instruments (and some play more than one). Mindy Cimini provides polished musical direction.

Todd Meredith, in his ninth production as Buddy Holly, was born to play this role. Genuinely accomplished as a singer and guitar player, he personifies the rock star, giving him a wonderful zest for life in a performance that is nothing short of brilliant.

With a very functional set by Darcy Engel, period-appropriate costumes by David Withrow and a versatile lighting design by Michael Bert, the show looks good, too.

Alternately funny, uplifting and poignant, "The Buddy Holly Story," directed by Larry Smiglewski and choreographed by Stacy Alley, is invigorating excitement, filled with 25 songs performed by gifted singers and musicians. Definitely worthy of the standing ovation, which the grateful audience was happy to grant.

"The Buddy Holly Story" is playing now through August 7, with showtimes at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Saturdays, 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, and 3:00 p.m. on Sundays. Tickets are \$33-\$40. Call the box office at 845-794-1194 or visit the Forestburgh Playhouse online at www.fbplayhouse.org.

Get your tickets now, this show is sure to be a sellout.


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1. on *July 31, 2011 at 11:13 am* | [Reply](#)  Pam

We saw the Buddy Holly Story at the Forestburgh Playhouse this past Tuesday. It was incredible, so entertaining. One of those special moments you wish would never end.

Review: 'Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story' in Forestburgh

Lead solidly portrays star rock 'n' roller

By Marcus Kalipolites

For the Times Herald-Record

Published: 2:00 AM - 07/28/11

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FORESTBURGH — Who knows how rock 'n' roll might have changed had Buddy Holly not died at the age of 22? He was more than a top recording artist in his own right; his music and style of performance influenced the many rock performers that followed, including the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

In the current Forestburgh Playhouse production of "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story," written by Alan Janes, Todd Meredith is well cast as the crusading rock 'n' roller. Besides a proven record of having played the role in eight other shows, Meredith, in Tuesday night's opening performance, easily re-created the aura of a star.

Aside from Holly's trademark horn-rimmed glasses, it is in the energetic and almost frenzied movements that the actor-singer does as the mythical pioneer of rock 'n' roll. Meredith crouches while playing, hops on one leg, flexes his knees and also leaps in the air.

But these acrobatics come only after "Rose of Texas," the show's opening number in which Meredith's character and the Hayriders are deep in country music and performing on Lubbock's local radio station.

It doesn't take long, though, before creativity strikes and Buddy Holly & the Crickets are off and running through rock 'n' roll land in "Ready Teddy."

As Cricket Joe B. Mauldin, Bill Morey steals the show with his acrobatic handling of his acoustic string bass by playing while lying down, twirling it and climbing on it, all the while plucking away. In one selection, Meredith even joins the spectacle by mounting the large instrument as a ladder. Rounding out the trio of pathfinders is drummer Kyle Axman as Jerry Allison.

But amid the show's two dozen numbers, which include the top hits "Peggy Sue," "Oh Boy," "Maybe Baby" and "Everyday," there is a change of pace in "Good Time" as jazz singer Galyana Castillo does a lively song-and-dance routine at Harlem's Apollo Theatre.

And especially funny here is the Crickets' arrival at the famous Manhattan landmark where they nervously "face the music" before playing for a totally different crowd.

In another change of mood, David Marmanillo, with the help of rock 'n' roll DJ-singer-songwriter J.P. Richardson, also known as the Big Bopper, and the entire company, does a captivating Ritchie Valens in "La Bamba." It was during a concert tour that Valens, the Big Bopper, Holly and the pilot of their small plane died in a crash on Feb. 3, 1959.

Besides playing the Big Bopper, Max Nussbaum as the Decca producer of country music scorns Holly's early venture into rock 'n' roll. Even earlier, friend and radio disc jockey Hipockets Duncan (Dustin Smith) questions Holly's escape from country music.

But once committed, Holly finds support from producer Norman Petty (Kevin Confoy).

With direction by Larry Smiglewski, choreography by Stacy Allen and musical direction by Mindy Cimini, the show is a sure winner for rock 'n' roll fans.

If you go ...

What: "Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story"

Where: Forestburgh Playhouse, 39 Forestburgh Road, Forestburgh

When: 8 p.m. July 28-30 and Aug. 2-6; 2 p.m. Aug. 3; 3 p.m. July 31 and Aug. 7

Admission: \$33-\$40

Call: 794-1194

Visit: www.fbplayhouse.org

the story ends, since (not unlike Titanic) we took our seats knowing the ship would sink before the final curtain.

But the woman argued with me, insisting that J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson was very much alive and had not died in that fateful crash along with mega-star Richie Valens (portrayed with gyrating style by David Marmanillo). Not wanting to burst more bubbles, I admitted that I could be wrong (knowing full well that I was not) and promised not to give away any more plot points.

Now in his second season at the playhouse, Max Nussbaum (as the Bopper) embraced his role and rocked the house with a dead-on rendition of "Chantilly Lace," lending even more credence to the perception that these guys are still alive. Their music has never died.

While I enjoyed the ride, it was the audience reaction that really moved me, since the sold-out crowd was on its feet, clapping and singing along as the show reached its crescendo, culminating in a rare standing ovation that was (IMHO) well deserved, an opinion that does not often cross my mind. Sheepishly avoiding my gaze, the gal whose bubble had been burst at intermission stinked out of the theatre, clearly loath to acknowledge that (for something completely different) my musical history lesson was correct.

Feeling that I was on to something, I veered off the road and into my seat at the Bethel Woods Performing Arts Center (www.bethelwoods.org) to learn more about '80s rock explosion The Goo Goo Dolls. Again, I observed more than participated as the seats filled for opening band Parachute and the wildly popular Michelle Branch, who performed fresh hits from her new album, before The Dolls hit the stage, electric guitars wailing.

Lead singer John Rzeznik (no clue how that is pronounced) illustrated what crowd pleasing is as the band rocked the pavilion with their unique brand of entertainment (translation: loud—really, really loud) as I adjusted my earplugs and came to understand why millions of fans are "Ga Ga for Goo Goo." Ingenuous and disarming, the band mates were in synch and I found myself digging the (slightly muffled) intricate sound.

"Thanks for being our friend for all these years" Rzeznik shouted to the audience, which encompassed generations. Ranging from teens to senior citizens, Goo Goo Dolls aficionados come in a variety of flavors, and I overheard several commenting on the scope and complexity of the bands' history, which has enjoyed a healthy run that shows no signs of slowing down.

I could have felt like a dinosaur at a show such as this, but thankfully did not, and have developed a new appreciation for '80s rock that I thought had passed me by. Grasping the fact that there are gaps in my musical education is good for me, but I am looking forward to upcoming shows at Bethel Woods featuring Janet Jackson and Elton John, since I suspect I'll be on firmer ground. All hail rock and roll!

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Spanning 3 states, 5 counties, 60 communities and the Upper Delaware River

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Sullivan County Democrat

Dancing in your seat at 'Buddy Holly Story'

"Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story" is a musical tribute to a rock and roll pioneer whose skyrocketing career was cut short by a tragic plane crash in 1959. Holly was only 22 years old. However, writer Alan Janes' script is anything but sad or melancholy. To the contrary, it's one of the liveliest shows I've been to in a while. The show glosses over the details of Holly's life in order to give the audience as much of this legend's music as possible.

Several times during this Forestburgh Playhouse production, you feel as if you are right there in the front row of one of Buddy Holly's performances. There is a lot of talent that makes its way onto that converted barn's stage, but it's hard to deny that Todd Meredith's spirited performance as the young musical perfectionist Buddy Holly is what charges this particular production. His non-stop enthusiasm and energy keeps us watching, caring about him, and then jumping up in our seats and dancing. His musical talent, both vocally and on guitar, is captivating.

Though Mr. Meredith owns the spotlight of the show, several players make their presence known when given the chance. Bill Morey as Holly's early days bassist Joe is a riot when playing that big instrument. Once again, Galyana Castillo belts out a beauty in "Good Time." (I can't wait to see this gal in a major role!) Warwick Valley High School senior Ariana Sepulveda, who has been working backstage and performing small parts for nine years at the Playhouse, plays the role of Maria Elena (Mrs. Buddy Holly). It's a small role, but Ms. Sepulveda has a wonderful stage presence and plays this strong Latino with conviction.

There are a lot of fun times in the show, but the recreation of the 1959 Winter Dance Party in the second act takes the cake! It is the last gig Holly performs before boarding that fateful plane. Performing with him (and also dying in the plane crash) are The Big Bopper and Richie Valens. Max Nussbaum has a lot of fun playing the charismatic J.P. Richardson (aka The Big Bopper). His rendition of "Chantilly Lace" is a real entertaining trip down memory lane. David Marmanillo struts, bumps and grinds as the irresistible Latin singing sensation Richie Valens. His "La Bamba" gets the theater pumped up for the finale.

The ensemble of this production does a fantastic job of fleshing out the script as several characters in Holly's story and then being the musical back up to so many of the numbers, but none so vibrant and alive as the show's finale which ends with an audience up on your feet version of "Johnny Be Good."

Don Mclean's classic rock and roll melody "American Pie" refers to the tragic plane crash in the words "the day the music died." There is no better way to put it. But I can think of a better way to commemorate their music and that is with a rousing, clapping, toe tapping and dance in your seat musical experience that celebrates one of rock and roll's icons and his musical era. The productions run through August 7. For tickets and info visit www.FBplayhouse.org or call 794-1194.