

British Theatre Guide

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High School Musical

Book by David Simpatico adapted from the script by Peter Barsocchini
Newcastle Theatre Royal & Touring
(2008)

A sea of red and white flooding the City of Newcastle is a sight only ever visible on a derby match day between Sunderland and Newcastle but this week these colours signify the excitement that is the smash hit of the 21st century, *High School Musical*.

Children in their masses squealed with happiness as they prepared themselves for a live version of the Disney hit, with the majority donning the famous Wildcat cheerleading outfit complete with sparkling pom-poms. Those who weren't dressed for the occasion were kitted out by dutiful parents with an array of memorabilia including tee-shirts, pens, neck-tags and teddy bears amongst other branded (and expensive) novelties.

The curtain rising was enough to send dedicated fans through the roof with glee and the live orchestra swung into action with the opening 'Wildcat cheer' followed by the much-loved 'Start of something new'. A fantastic ensemble belted these songs with gusto and the design team provided a glorious environment of bright costumes and disco lighting. The slick ensemble soared seamlessly from scene to scene with the aid of Kenneth Foy's set design of rolling lockers, dining tables and school desks adding to the high energy nature of this production.

Leading the ensemble as brainiac transfer student, Gabriella Montez, was Lorna Want whose singing ability is outstanding and works in harmony with star-crossed lover, Troy Bolton played by Ashley Day. The chemistry of these two performers belongs in a fairy-tale and although the ending is clear from the onset, this didn't stop the audience from cheering raucously when they finally get together and almost drowned out the most famous song of all, 'Breaking Free'.

It is safe to say that the very name *High School Musical* and its huge fan base would have been enough to sell tickets in their thousands and with this knowledge it would have been easy to make a lacklustre attempt at a live production. However, director Jeff Calhoun has pulled out the stops and offered true value for money with this production. With excellent choreography from Lisa Stevens and high-energy performances this show is an absolute must-see for staunch fans of the film and its popular soundtrack.

Beware parents, this show is very loud and visually dazzling, but if you can handle your kids, laughing, singing, smiling and waving pom-poms (and the small fortune it will cost you) then don't miss it!

"High School Musical" is at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle until Sat 2nd August.

Katharine Capocci [reviewed](#) the 2009 tour, with a slightly different cast, in Sunderland

Reviewer: [V Mitchell](#)