

**AISLE SAY San Francisco**

# **BUDDY: THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY**

**By Alan Janes with Laurie Mansfield & Rob Bettinson**

**Directed by Stephen Moorer**

**Presented by San Jose Stage Company**

**At The Stage**

**490 S. First St., San Jose, CA / (408) 283-7142**

**Reviewed by [Judy Richter, www.aislesay.com](http://www.aislesay.com)**

**San Jose Stage Company** is raising the roof with its latest production, "**Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story**." The company also is undoubtedly raising cash, for the show has been attracting full houses, resulting in an extension through the end of September for sure and possibly into October. All for good reason, because the show is a knock-out success that has its audiences cheering.

Credit for this success needs to be spread around, starting with its writer, **Alan Janes**, who developed an idea by **Laurie Mansfield** and used additional material by **Rob Bettinson**. The show was named best new musical in both London and New York in 1991. Since then it has been seen throughout the country. Also deserving credit for this production's success are director **Stephen Moorer** and musical director **Don Dally**, who also plays guitarist Tommy in the show. Even more credit goes to a terrific cast. And finally, we can thank Buddy Holly, the rock 'n' roll genius who skyrocketed to the top of the charts in the late '50s, then died in a plane crash in 1959, when he was only 22 years old.

The show traces Holly's career starting in January 1956 when 19-year-old Buddy (**Travis Poelle**) and his two pals, bass player Joe B. Mauldin (**Michael Yocco**) and drummer Jerry Allison (**Stewart Lyle**), performed as Buddy Holly and the Crickets on a country-western radio station in Lubbock, Texas, their home town. The problem was that Buddy didn't want to do CW. Inspired by Elvis Presley, he wanted to do his own music, rock 'n' roll. He and the Crickets stubbornly stuck with his vision and eventually found their way from Lubbock and Clovis, N.M., to international stardom. Along the way, they cranked out hits like "**That'll Be the Day**," "**Peggy Sue**," "**Words of Love**," "**Johnny B. Goode**" and many others. The show ends with Buddy's final concert in Clear Lake, Iowa, in February 1959, only a few hours before he and J.P. Richardson, known as the Big Bopper (**Scott Free**), Ritchie Valens (**Manuel Romero**) and their pilot died in a plane crash.

Poelle is nothing short of sensational as Buddy Holly. A triple-threat performer, he's a good actor, plays a mean guitar and sings well. Not only that, but he exudes charm, humility, energy and charisma, pouring out hit after hit in the final scene. Most of the other principals also have to act, sing and -- in many cases -- play an instrument, and all of them excel. Special note goes to the aforementioned performers, especially Romero for Ritchie Valens' "**La Bamba**." Also noteworthy are **Erika Yanin Perez Hernandez** as Maria Elena, the Puerto Rican receptionist Buddy meets in New York, proposes to that night and marries just two months later; and **Charmaine Scott** as the Apollo vocalist the night that Buddy and the Crickets broke the color barrier in the famed Harlem club.

With sets by **John Francis Brady**, costumes by **Tandy Messenger**, lights by **Michael Walsh** and sound by **Robert A. Havlice**, "The Buddy Holly Story" is a must-see for anyone who loves rock 'n' roll and who wants to learn more about a man who is so important in its history that he influenced the Beatles and inspired Don McLean's elegy, "**American Pie**."