

UGLY TALE A REAL BEAUTY Date : 25.10.06

Honk! is the story of The Ugly Duckling, one of Hans Christian Anderson's classic tales, brought to life in a witty musical comedy with great songs, great one-liners and all-round family fun. Spring has come to Duckyard and Drake (the Mallard duck) and his partner Ida, await the birth of their new brood. But one of the eggs appears to be extraordinarily large this year - enter the ugly duckling, a chick that bears no resemblance to its siblings and who appears to make a strange 'honk' noise instead of the usual quack.



It was the start of a brand new production for **Stoke Youth Musical Theatre Company** as it began a week-long run of George Stiles and Anthony Drewe's award-winning musical at Hanley's Mitchell Memorial Theatre last night. And the opening night's presentation couldn't have gone any better.

With a sloping stage that centred around a small duck pond, the scenery for **Honk!** was simple yet idyllic - the performance, however, was strong and captivating from the outset with a great cast that certainly did the company proud.

It is very rare in amateur theatre, especially youth theatre, to have a cast comprising so many talented performers but **Honk!** seemed to pull out all the stops as it presented mature singing and acting from both leading roles and company.

Taking on the role of Ida was Emma Salvo who, in my opinion, had the strongest vocal of the night as she sang through many songs including The Joy of Motherhood and Hold Your Head Up High. Michael Carthy had the challenge of presenting the innocence of Ugly which he did with effortless sincerity, while Lee Birkin played a funny and highly eccentric Cat. **Honk!** is directed and choreographed by Craig Armstrong with musical direction by Laura Bowler, a student of composition at Manchester's Royal Northern College of Music. Together they ensured a highly professional show that is definitely worth a look.