

A love song no one knows is gay

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

"Jersey Boys" — It is a classic American tale, straight out of the 1960s. Recounting the life and times of the hit group the Four Seasons, this musical is a favorite among old and young alike.

The musical will run in Raleigh June 24 through July 18 at Progress Energy Center. Q-Notes had the opportunity to speak to Jonathan Hadley, who plays the Four Seasons' bisexual producer Bob Crewe. A Charlotte

native and Myers Park High School graduate, the openly gay Hadley attended the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem and has been performing live for two decades now.

Tell us a little bit about you. How'd you get involved in theater?

It all started when I was five years old. I worked with the Charlotte Children's Theatre and the Central Piedmont Summer Theatre. I

did all that through high school and in college did a lot of classical training, which was fantastic. I moved to New York and just started auditioning. One of my first jobs was in the original tour of "Into the Woods." I got to work with Steven Sondheim and Charlotte Ray and all these wonderful people right out of school. That was a real gift. **When did you join up with the "Jersey Boys" tour, and how is life**

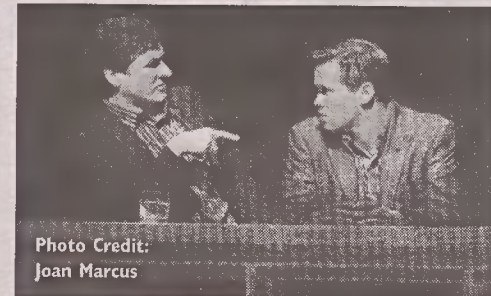


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Joan Marcus

Jonathan Hadley (left) as Bob Crewe on the road?

I've been on the road now almost a year. Right now I'm in Ft. Lauderdale — I'm forcing myself to enjoy it. It has been a nice little change. It is great being on the road, though, and interesting to see how the show plays in different cities. That's been fun.

You play Bob Crewe in the musical. Most people who maybe grew up listening to the Four Season or folks who hear them now have no idea who Bob is. What is it that drew you to the character?

I knew probably about as much as you do or anyone else — which was nothing (laughs). Immediately after I got the script, though, I was connected to the writing. It is such a great script. The writers have done a wonderful job creating and telling the stories of these characters. They are real people. Bob Crewe was their lyricist, manager and producer. He was really instrumental in creating that signature Four Seasons sound.

Bob is described as the group's "flamboyant" producer. Come on, we all know that's a big code word for gay. Back in April, a writer for *The South Florida Blade*, said Crewe's character is "the diva of Jersey Boys." Does Bob's identity as gay or bi show through in the musical at all?

Absolutely, it does. And as how Bob would identify himself is up to him. There is an accompanying book to the musical they sell in the lobby. It tells the story of the Four Seasons and the making of "Jersey Boys." In that, Crewe identifies himself as bisexual. Perhaps if we saw him today, we'd probably immediately identify him as a gay man, but this was 1963. Perceptions were quite different.

I was reading an interview you gave with *InsideOut* in Nashville this past March. You talked a little bit about the origin for "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." Tell our readers about that story.

I love that story! I found out about it once I joined the company. Personally, I have not met Bob Crewe, but we have emailed. Others have related this story to me, though. "Can't Take My Eyes Off You" was probably the most successful pop song in the history of pop music and no one even knows it was a gay love song! Bob Crewe was trying to figure out the lyrics, pacing the floor at night in his apartment and turned and saw his young lover lying in the bed. The words came to him immediately. He wrote the whole thing that night, to a young lover. I just love it. **What do you think is the underlying, compelling human story told by "Jersey Boys" through the story of its real life characters?**

That's a good question (laughs). Ultimately, it is a story of perseverance. Frankie and Bob Gaudio were just so struggling. It is also a story of friendship — you see these guys' friendship get them through a lot. ■



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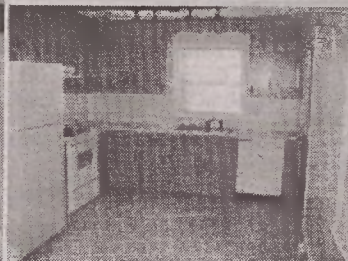
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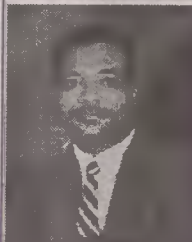
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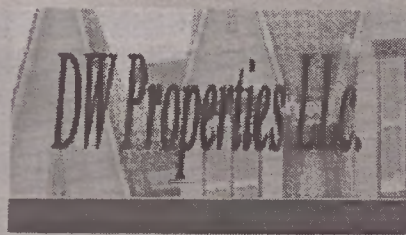
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