



Boys), but the success of shows like *We Will Rock You*, *Jersey Boys* and *Rock Of Ages* proves that the jukebox musical is well and truly entrenched in contemporary theatre culture.

In the case of *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, audiences have pounced on tickets since it debuted on Broadway last year. As the title suggests, it tells the story of the legendary singer/songwriter and her rise to fame from humble small town beginnings (her 1971 album, *Tapestry*, won four Grammys and sold over 25 million copies).

Based on Douglas McGrath's book, the story follows King's career from her early days with fellow songwriters and best friends Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann and, of course, her then husband Gerry Goffin. The show

not to say it doesn't still connect with the audience.

In the tradition of the jukebox musical, the show features some outstanding numbers, or "the hits", reinforcing that King possessed a formidable songwriting talent, which some regard as the soundtrack of a generation. Apart from her own classics, King (and her husband) also wrote a number of songs for other artists, including The Beatles (*Chains*), The Monkees (*Pleasant Valley Sunday*) and Little Eva (*The Locomotion*) later made '80s-famous by Kylie.

Beautiful has been a sold-out success with accolades that include a Grammy and a Tony Award for lead actress Jessie Mueller (who resembles a young King). More recently the role

“ King herself had final approval on the production, so some of the warts-and-all segments have been edited out. ”

Classic Caroling

Love them or loathe them, jukebox musicals are a thing, with varying degrees of success. Now, 1970's folk/pop icon Carole King joins this theatrical tapestry, but is she spinning something beautiful?



(Left) Carole King's *Tapestry*, released in 1971, is one of the best-selling albums in history; (Above left) King today.

journeys through her early days in Brooklyn and onto the bright lights of Carnegie Hall, with all the dramas and emotions that come along the way.

While some critics have suggested that the story lacks enough drama, most have praised the performances, songs and an overall 'bounce' that wins over the hearts and minds of a nostalgic, yet also new-age, audience. Considering that King herself had final approval on the production, some of the warts-and-all segments have been edited out. The opposite of a show like *Jersey Boys*, this musical lacks an exposed gritty feeling, but that's

has been successfully taken over by Canadian actress Chilina Kennedy. Similarly winning great praise has been Scott J Campbell in the role of Gerry Goffin.

Across the Atlantic in London's West End, Katie Brayben and Alan Morrissey have been wowing audiences in the British production of *Beautiful*, where 73-year-old Carole King surprised all with an unannounced visit on opening night.

Overall, reviews have been positive and we can expect to see *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* around for a good while yet. With classic songs like *I Feel The Earth Move*, *It's Too Late* and *You've Got A Friend*, how can this production be anything but beautiful?

MORE: *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* is playing at New York's Stephen Sondheim Theatre and London's West End Aldwych Theatre. For more visit www.beautifulonbroadway.com or www.beautifulmusical.co.uk.

IN RECENT YEARS there has been a huge trend in the adaptation of popular song catalogues into musical theatre productions. Known as jukebox musicals, this genre goes back as far as 1974 when Robert Stigwood produced *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band On The Road* for Broadway but, sadly, it was a far cry from Beatlemania (it only ran for 66 performances). Other more

successful productions such as *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *The Buddy Holly Story* and *Saturday Night Fever* followed, but the genre gained its strongest momentum when the songs of ABBA formed *Mamma Mia!* and kick-started a whole new era.

There have been the flops, such as *Lennon* and *Good Vibrations* (respectively featuring the work of John Lennon and The Beach