Classy amateurs learn how to fly

Theatre review

Fame: The Musical   The Regent Theatre
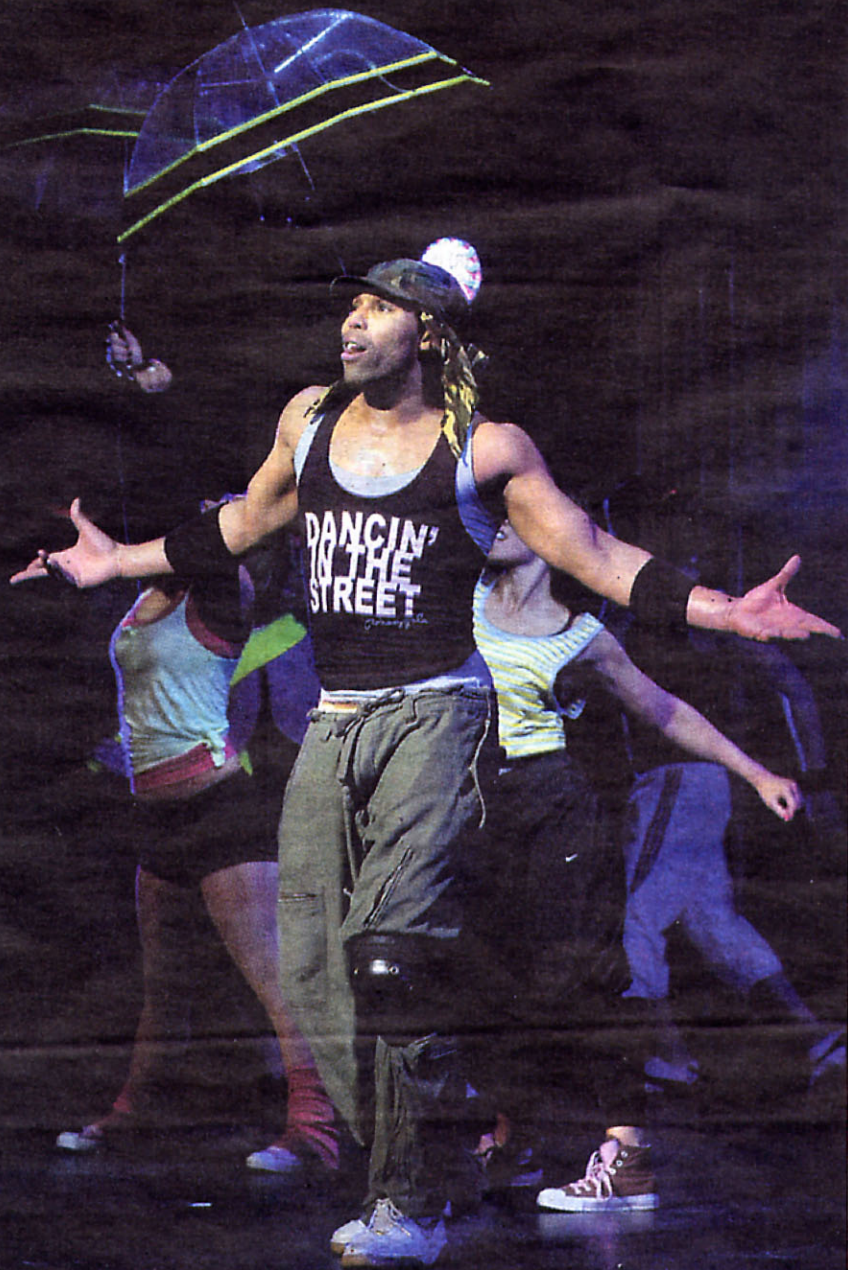
WITH summer traditionally viewed as a lean time for regional theatre, it's refreshing to see the Regent put to such good use with this run of Fame: The Musical.

It also happens to be a measure of the ambition of ATT – At The Theatre – Productions. Not content with filling any old school or village hall stage with dodgy sets and mum-made costumes, this largely amateur company has instead opted to perform the 'kids from the wrong side of the tracks done good' tale at one of the premier theatrical venues in Staffordshire. Talk about a challenge.

Thankfully, the extended cast were more than able to do justice to their grand surroundings, with not even the slightest suggestion of nerves to hint at their youth or the packed audience before them. Selected from a gruelling round of local auditions held earlier in the year, a talented ensemble of singers and dancers cart-wheeled, star jumped and pirouetted their way through two hours of high-energy entertainment with enough technical skill to make anyone over 25 green with envy. Well choreographed set-pieces (culminating, of course, in an exuberant rendition of the famous title song) were punctuated with solo performances from Gareth Ridge and Luke Gessner, both rapidly becoming familiar faces to the city's theatregoers – and justifiably so. Some of the leads were given over to those with professional credits to their name (Mark Taylor as Tyrone Jackson should be billed as an attraction in his own right), which is where any description of ATT as 'amateur' becomes thinly stretched.

There were some significant sound problems but, judging by their high standards in other areas, these will no doubt be resolved for future performances. So put aside thoughts of doting parents, forgotten lines and general am-dram mishap – if you're yearning for the start of the autumn season and fancy a night out at the theatre this week, Fame comes very close to the real deal.

■ Runs until Saturday. Tickets: 0870 0606649.

Zita Collinson

LIVING FOREVER: ATT performing Fame at the Regent.
Picture: Wesley Webster