

## John M. Coppola – “A Jersey Voice, Sinatra to Springsteen...and Everyone in Between

For this fan of Frankie Valli, the Four Seasons, and Jersey Boys, John Michael Coppola’s debut solo show in Arlington Heights, IL on Friday, February 25, 2011 was an additional bonus to the concerts and shows of the last few years. While John clearly topped his overall performance with “Can’t Take My Eyes Off of You” as his encore, his delightful, somewhat surprising choice of “Cry for Me” during the first act of the show put the audience clearly in his hands. This seminal song is often “new” to many audience members when they see Jersey Boys – and this audience was clearly delighted to hear it.



Surrounding these choices from the Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons catalog, John Michael presented a very broad range to selections to his sold out, primarily senior, audience. Opening with Frank Sinatra’s “I’m Gonna Live Till I Die,” John immediately showed the energy and audience connection with “I’ll be a devil until I’m an angel.” Jumping immediately to Bill Haley’s “Rock Around the Clock,” it was clear that John Michael was going to present a wide range of selections. Beyond the clear favorites from Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, I was personally captured when John performed his third selection, Nat King Cole’s “Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer.” Not only a perfect antidote to the cold, snow-filled Midwest winter, it’s just a song I’ve always loved. And wished I had picked to be in John’s second act contest, I could have nailed the “next line” when he challenged an audience member with “soda, and pretzels, and beer.”

Doing a little picking on Robert Goulet for a disco version of “If I Ever I Would Leave You,” he still gave the audience a wonderful rendition of what many I’m sure knew as a classic from “Camelot.” He then gave the audience his own version of Dean Martin’s “Winter Romance,” beautifully edited to explain the start of his relationship with his wife, Rachel. Neil Sedaka’s “Calendar Girl” followed which caught most in the audience by surprise when he followed the song with a Jersey Boys reference by saying “I’m no Neil Sedaka.” Then came “Cry for Me” which certainly grabbed the audience filled with Jersey Boys fans.

John Michael then introduced a song from “Baby,” that clearly fit into the story he was weaving for the audience, “I Choose Right,” which should be a more popular wedding song than I think it is. And finally, to close Act 1, John Michael sang along with “me, myself, and I” in a wonderfully, technically driven version of “So Much in Love,” the hit I remember by the Tymes. Singing all four parts clearly showed John’s four octave vocal range.

After intermission, John opened Act II in a straw hat and cane to sing and dance his way through “Song and Dance Man,” an obvious Vaudeville classic, followed by a return to Sinatra with “You Make Me Feel

So Young.” Then John performed a seamless medley: "Look Around," from The Will Rogers Follies, and "To Be One" by Billy Jonas.

Bringing the audience back to the reality of a cold Illinois night, when in fact it was starting to snow again outside, John Michael presented a nice medley of "Let It Snow" and "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm." The Sinatra – Valli connection was clear and the audience was enjoying the moments.

His "closing number," a personal "anthem" was "We Live on Borrowed Time" by David Friedman." While some of the audience might have suspected the end of the concert, I was suspicious we were going to get a hoped for Frankie Valli finish. It only took a few seconds for John Michael to let the audience know "you earned this." And he then launched into "his new anthem," Frankie Valli's "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." With the audience approval and the outstanding musicians made up of many performers familiar to Michael Ingersoll's "Under the StreetLamp" performances, the audience left to what I was hearing as very satisfied and entertained participants in John Michael Coppola's launch as a solo performer.

It is important to note that John Michael Coppola is clearly making support for charitable causes a key part of his solo performances. At this show, he auctioned off two Frankie Valli signed copies of sheet music for JRC of Evanston (Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation) to help construct a playground at his son's school.