

Review: Dreamgirls

By Suzanne Cleave

***Dreamgirls*: Theatre Royal Plymouth**

The dazzling *Dreamgirls*, on tour direct from the West End, has taken residence at the Theatre Royal Plymouth until August 6 – and it's one not to miss.

Sequins, soul music, spine-tingling vocals and a mixed bag of emotions, *Dreamgirls* tells the showbiz rollercoaster of three singers – Effie White, Deena Jones and Lorrell Robinson - who start off as backing singers for soul singer Jimmy Early before hitting the big time themselves.

The trio first meet hip swinging Early (a show stealing performance by Brandon Lee Sears), at a talent competition where he laments that he has lost his backing singers. It is orchestrated that the girls don't win the competition and so are available to take their place behind Early.

With the backing of manager Curtis Taylor (Matt Mills), and the song writing skills of Effie's brother C C White (Shem Omari James), they endure a testing path to fight the racist prejudice of the 1960's music scene and try to make the country change through music.

Curtis soon turns his attention away from Early and onto the girls, with the aim of making them stars in their own right. But, although Effie has the most powerful voice, Curtis favours Deena to take lead vocals, purely because of her looks, which leads to Effie storming out.

Nicole Raquel Dennis' magnificent performance of Effie White earned her a standing ovation with her emotional and powerful performance of 'And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going.'

The other two singers also have their story to tell - Deena (Natalie Kassanga) slowly grows in confidence, both on stage and in her private life, and Lorrell (a stand-out performance by Paige Peddie), brings comedy to the story as she transitions from a

starstruck teenager to a woman who gains her own independence.

After shunning the limelight, Effie returns with a song, written for her by her brother 'One Night Only', but, jealous of her success with the ballad, Curtis forces The Dreams to release the same song as a disco version, and through some dodgy dealings, they overtake Effie in the charts.

Karma soon takes an effect, and Curtis' desire for fame eventually comes crashing around his ears, as the girls reconcile and reunite, with Effie taking her place back in the group.

There's a feeling of power and of independence that grows in the girls, and watching their journey is incredibly heart-warming.

It's definitely a must-see, you will leave the theatre feeling uplifted, moved and wanting to see it again and again – it's fantastic!