

# Review: Thriller Live, Edinburgh

By DREW McADAM

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AS an opener, five lads with bushy afro hairstyles belt out the Jackson 5's 1970 number one hit ABC. Edinburgh Playhouse, Greenside Place \* \* \*

Resplendent in colourful Seventies dress, it's a splendid opening to the show.

Even more so when tiny Emmanuel Sakyi skips on stage to perform as the young Michael Jackson. It's a moment that has a real 'Aww' factors for the mums.

It was all hi-energy, glitzy stuff, and their portrayal of The Jacksons hit the mark. It offered the promise of a great night. Indeed, the audience was on its feet by the fifth number. The energy level continued with some tight choreography, fast costume changes and a cracking rendition of the 1978 Blame it on the Boogie. And then it slowed down. Andrew Derbyshire, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Gary Tank Commander, performed the melancholy She's Out Of My Life. From there, the show took a long dip as it followed a relentless list of disco numbers.

Great performance takes more than simply aping Jackson's moves and mannerisms. Unfortunately, no matter how talented a performer might be at replicating the greatest showman the world has ever seen, you are aware that you are watching an imitation. One that can never possibly match the original.

This wasn't the gigantic talent of Michael Jackson on stage. And despite the remarkable behind-the-scenes band, the result was a cabaret show. A good song and dance cabaret show with pyrotechnics, granted, but no more than that.

For fanatical Jackson followers, this is a truly great show. For those on a night out at the theatre, it's a rendition of well known pop songs. Even the dancing – and it is very good – is little more than the sort of street dancing you see Ashley Banjo and his crew regularly perform.

What saves the show from total mediocrity is the fabulous voices of the vocalists such as Samantha Johnson.

But even re-enacting the Thriller video - with a limited number of zombies - is never going to bring the show anywhere near the level it needs to compare with the original. Like the rest of the production it is entertaining, but inevitably falls short.