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STAGE · THEATRE

Broadway's Grease

BY LAURATWK — 2026-05-02



Summer Loving Had This Crowd a Blast

Fresh from their triumphs with **Les Misérables** and The Phantom of the Opera¹, **Broadway Productions** has shifted gears dramatically with their latest offering: a fast-paced, hour-long abridged version of the beloved musical **Grease**.

Trading gothic chandeliers and barricades for leather jackets, pink satin, and a whole lot of hair gel, this production delivers an energetic, dance-heavy spectacle that captures the spirit of Rydell High with infectious enthusiasm. I find myself admiring that the producer **Vibrent** resisted the temptations of simply trying to go bigger and bigger with each successive production. Instead of chasing escalating spectacle for its own sake, they have elected to tackle something tonally and structurally different - a wise choice that keeps their work feeling fresh and unpredictable.

¹<https://new.thehiddencircle.com/broadways-phantom/>



The production (now sadly having concluded its run) ran across four shows with two alternating casts, and both ensembles did a terrific job, all looking perfectly the part. The T-Birds were brought to life by a consistent crew across both performances: **MonsieurShadow** as the eager Doody, **MrJohnnyT** as the smooth Sonny, and **DaveEEE** as the hapless Putzie. The Pink Ladies, too, featured **NinaSin** as the knowing Jan and **HallieC** as the glamorous Marty, both delivering sharp comic turns.

The evening kicked off with a clever musical fake-out: an aborted rendition of *"Staying Alive"* that quickly segued into the iconic *"Grease (Is the Word)"* - a playful nod that immediately set the fun, irreverent tone.

From there, we launched into the beloved *"Summer Nights,"* with the ensemble splitting into gendered clusters to recount Danny and Sandy's holiday romance from their wildly differing perspectives. **CurtWoodman** brought an effortlessly charismatic swagger to Danny's boastful verses on Saturday, while Monday's **JesterPaul** offered a rougher-edged, more comically exaggerated machismo. Both Sandys - **Aspiria** on Saturday with her sweet vulnerability and **FeliciaBlack** on Monday with her luminous innocence - balanced their counterparts beautifully.

What followed was a charmingly staged surprise meeting between the two leads, where the gap between Danny's cool-guy persona and his genuine feelings for Sandy was immediately and delightfully apparent, setting the central romantic tension in motion.



The action then shifted focus to the Pink Ladies. *"Look at Me, I'm Sandra Dee"* was delivered with perfect sardonic wit by Rizzo, skewering Sandy's wholesome image while surrounded by her giggling, cigarette-smoking girlfriends. **Neenna** brought a sharp, almost dangerous edge to the number on Saturday, while Monday's **SerenityBunny** infused it with a more acerbic vibe. Both were superb.

The mood then softened considerably as Sandy, left alone, poured her heart out in a heartfelt *"Hopelessly Devoted to You"* - a moment of genuine vulnerability that grounded the show's frivolity. Unexpectedly, this was followed immediately by *"Sandy,"* Danny's own pining ballad. Placed much earlier here than in the film, the back-to-back arrangement created a lovely, aching symmetry: both lovers separately lamenting their inability to connect, neither knowing the other feels exactly the same. It worked surprisingly well as an emotional one-two punch.

Next, we were transported to the Frosty Palace Diner, a chrome booth haven where the gang gathered to gossip, flirt, and bicker. Keeping the milkshakes flowing and the fries coming was **MsAlleDonovan** as Vi, the no-nonsense owner whose world-weary glances and perfectly timed exasperation with the rowdy teenagers provided a delightful grounding presence amidst the hormonal chaos. The comic highlight was, of course, *"Beauty School Dropout,"* complete with a dreamlike appearance by Frankie Avalon, urging Frenchy to return to her studies. **RileyFreeze** played Frenchy across both casts, and her ditzy, lovable charm was a constant delight.



A dramatic shift in tone followed with Rizzo's pregnancy revelation - a whispered confession that silenced the diner's chatter. This led into her stunning, vulnerable rendition of "*There Are Worse Things I Could Do*," a raw, defiant anthem that laid bare her fears beneath the tough exterior. Both **Neenna** and **SerenityBunny** delivered it with breathtaking honesty. And, although this was another that was slightly shifted around in the running order, it's new home was effective within the context of this abridged version.

The scene then moved to the school gym, transformed with balloons and bandstand for the big dance competition. Here came the production's most significant departure from the film: Elvis Presley himself appeared on stage to perform a medley of songs. The role was shared by **Agitator** on Saturday, who brought an energetic, almost punk-rock sneer to the King, and **Hikikomori** on Monday, who leaned into a more traditional, hip-swivelling homage, both of whom pulled double duty by also appearing earlier on the show as Frankie Avalon during Frenchy's dream sequence.

Swapping out the fictional Johnny Casino and the Gamblers for the King himself was a smart choice. In the film, Johnny's band performs an Elvis cover anyway, so this decision brings the homage full circle while giving the production a recognizable icon to anchor its extended musical interlude which served as both the dance competition sequence and a celebration of 1950s rock and roll culture.



Following the final Elvis number, the story paused for a brief intermission, featuring an additional on-stage performance by Elvis, giving the audience a welcome chance to stretch, visit the toilet, and grab a drink. A practical touch that was actually quite welcome and something I hope that continues to be used in future productions.

Throughout all his time on-stage, the Elvis band was anchored by **AbitTwisted** on drums, with **Auld Codger** and **Sanguine Star** trading guitar licks.

The final action roared back to life with one of the show's most anticipated numbers: "*Grease Lightning*." The iconic car was revealed in all its imagined glory, with Kenickie and Danny leading the ensemble in a high-octane celebration of automotive fantasy. **BenL** in the role of Kenickie for both nights, played the perfect foil to Danny, especially in this scene.



And a particular spectacle came during the dance break of "*Grease Lightning*", when the Pink Ladies descended from the rafters to form a dazzling dance ensemble, creating a stunning vertical theatrical moment that drew genuine gasps from the audience. This clever staging felt like a deliberate, playful homage to Danny's own dramatic descent astride the Grease Lightning engine in the theatrical version and a nice bit of visual rhyming from the choreographer.

The energy didn't let up from there as the show powered into the explosive "*You're the One That I Want*", complete with Sandy's show-stopping transformation into leather-clad, hair-sprayed cool girl. That, of course, led directly into

the production's closing number with the joyous, hand-jiving singalong "*We Go Together*", sending the audience out into the night on a wave of pure, uncomplicated happiness.

Now, a slight detour from me as I have to unpack a little of my own personal baggage. Yes, I once I again have to insert some of that. It is already starting to feel like this could be an ongoing theme with these musical reviews...

*Much like my childhood resentment of *The Phantom of the Opera* cassette in the family car that I spoke about in my [previous review](/broadways-phantom/), I grew up with Elvis Presley pushed upon me relentlessly by my parents, specifically my dad. However, in a funny bit of symmetry, unlike with *Phantom*, I have never come to appreciate the King and continue to have zero time for his music. I still find it as unbearable as ever. As you can imagine, that made a portion of the performance a little difficult for me personally but the considerably showmanship by both Agitator and Hikikomori, as well as the wonderful choreography of the Rydell High students, helped me get through that section.*

*Don't get me wrong, I fully understand why the production included it and can recognise the appeal it will hold for many audience members who revere him. The real shame, for me, was that this Elvis-heavy interlude came at the expense of "*Blue Moon*", which was one omission from the song list that I really wished had been in there. That gentle, dreamy number from the dance competition, could have been a welcome contrast to the high-octane rock and roll. That said, in an abridged version where several key subplots that build to that song inevitably had to be trimmed, it makes sense that this quieter, more atmospheric moment would be the one to fall away rather than be crowbarred in without the full context*

*And yes, it's not just the music of *Blue Moon* that I missed, but also the opportunity for a bit of bum flashing up on-stage to bring just a little bit of silly lewdness to proceedings. I do love me a nice bit of man bum after all so would have very much enjoyed those moons.*

But enough of talking about that because I really want to talk about some of the things that this show did so well. And one area in which this *Grease* truly excels is in its scale and movement. The dance routines felt significantly more expressive and more expansive than anything seen in the company's previous productions. The cast felt larger, more dynamic, and the choreography by **Scarlett** made full use of the stage's width and depth. It was a joy to watch the ensemble move as a unified, energetic wave of 1950s style, with the T-Birds and Pink Ladies throwing themselves into every number with visible joy.



The stage setup was also excellent, with iconic set pieces lovingly represented: the chrome-trimmed Frosty Palace Diner booth, the gleaming chassis of Grease Lightning, the school gym with its pastel dance competition decorations, and, my favourite, Frenchy's bedroom. The costumes continue this theme of excellence, beautifully evoking the 1950s - from the greasers' rolled-up jeans, white t-shirts, and leather jackets to the Pink Ladies' satin jackets, capri pants, and poodle skirts. Every character looked like they had stepped straight out of a vintage yearbook.

Ultimately, this abridged Grease is a high-energy, well-crafted crowd-pleaser. It sacrifices some narrative depth for speed and spectacle, but what it loses in nuance it more than gains in sheer, joyful momentum to squeeze into its tight 1 hour runtime.

The two casts should be proud of their work, and the production team has delivered another ambitious, entertaining night at the theatre. Despite my personal indifference to the Elvis interlude, I left the theatre beaming from ear to ear which, for Grease, is really the only metric that matters.

And, as a bonus treat for those in attendance at the final show, the company announced their next production: **The Rocky Horror Picture Show**, coming in July. If this Grease is any indication of their growing ambition and flair for crowd-pleasing spectacle, that midnight-movie classic should be one to watch.



To learn more about Laura's online experiences, check out her [blog](<https://www.lauratwk.co.uk>).