



Review: *A Beautiful Noise* • Brings Neil Diamond's Music to Life at Salt Lake City's Eccles Theater

Description

Salt Lake City, UT From the downbeat of this musical, *A Beautiful Noise* signals that Neil Diamond's music is the driving force of its storytelling. Directed by **Michael Mayer**, with a book by **Anthony McCarten**, the production embraces its role as a tribute to the catalog that shaped Diamond into an American icon. It's built for his longtime faithful—the generation whose memories are stitched to vinyl grooves and late-summer concerts, who hear the opening notes of *Sweet Caroline* and respond on instinct. The show leans into that devotion without apology. It knows its audience.

As someone outside that circle, I entered as a reviewer rather than a nostalgic fan, simply prepared to meet the show where it lives. I didn't expect to be disarmed by the craftsmanship shimmering beneath the rhinestones. But I was.

And it's no mystery why his music endures. According to Billboard's Adult Contemporary charts—a genre shaped by lyric-forward pop, soft rock, and the songwriter tradition—Diamond isn't just beloved; he is statistically foundational to the format. From 1961–2011, Billboard ranked him the No. 2 Adult Contemporary artist (second only to Elton John), with 38 top-10 AC songs and 58 chart entries—numbers that demonstrate how thoroughly his sound has permeated American listening habits.

Before watching the show, Diamond was, to me, a constant in the cultural atmosphere—a musician whose songs felt ever-present. What I didn't realize was the breadth of his songwriting. Discovering that he released 39 albums, sold more than 130 million records, and penned now-iconic hits like *I'm a Believer* reframed everything I thought I knew. I walked in respecting Diamond as an icon; I walked out with a deeper appreciation for the craftsman behind the myth.

That's the foundation *A Beautiful Noise* builds on.

A scene depicting three characters in a recording studio setting, with one man in a suit, a woman in t

Tuck Milligan as Tommy Rourke, Michael Accardo as Bert Berns and Nick Fradiani as Neil. Photo credit: Jeremy Daniel

Plot Summary + Jukebox-Memoir Lineage

While *A Beautiful Noise* is unmistakably a jukebox musical, it is also a bio-musical that traces Diamond's path from a Brooklyn kid with a guitar to an arena-filling global superstar. The framing device is a series of therapy sessions in which an older Neil is asked to revisit the relationships, pressures, and insecurities that shaped both his career and his sound. The songs don't decorate the story—they *structure* it. Each hit becomes a hinge, a revelation, or a reckoning.

This approach places the show in the lineage of *Jersey Boys* and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*—pop memoirs where memory is scored, and biography moves in harmony with the music. *A Beautiful Noise* has been praised as "a heartwarming celebration of Mr. Diamond's uplifting music and inspirational life" (*The Washington Times*), and that spirit threads through every beat of the evening.

Producer Ken Davenport calls Diamond "one of the best live entertainers the world has ever seen," noting that bringing the show to Salt Lake City after a celebrated Broadway run feels like a natural extension of Diamond's touring legacy. Producer Bob Gaudio, who helped shape the musical landscape of the show, acknowledged the challenge behind the task:

"Creating a musical with Neil Diamond's music is a daunting task. This creative team delivered an incisive book, fantastic choreography, and Neil's iconic songs."

And beneath the pedigree and polish, the production offers unexpected revelations—the kind that invite even newcomers to lean in and listen differently.

A female performer stands confidently on stage, wearing a white t-shirt, blue jeans, and red boots, Hannah Jewel Kohn as Marcia Murphey. Photo credit: Jeremy Daniel.

Performances that give the show its pulse

The emotional architecture of the evening rests largely on the cast, whose performances give the musical its heartbeat.

Robert Westenberg, a Tony nominee, anchors the show as **Neil**. Now, carrying the therapy framing with a grounded, gently weathered presence.

Lisa Rene Pitts, the Doctor, gives the show its reflective spine. Her performance is steady and humane.

As Marcia Murphey, Diamond's second wife, **Hannah Jewel Kohn** brings emotional clarity and complexity to every scene. Her frustration, humor, vulnerability, and strength cut cleanly through the glittering spectacle, especially as Neil's fame expands and their relationship shifts under its weight. Kohn traces those changes with nuance—never forced, always deeply human—and her brief dance solo becomes one of the show's most striking moments, a physical expression of longing and the

ache of loving someone already half-lost to the spotlight. Her vocals match the emotional range she brings—clear, expressive, and powerhouse vocals when the moment calls for it.

Tiffany Tatreau, as **Jaye Posner**, Diamond's first wife, delivers a performance just as emotionally textured, though in a different register. Her warmth, steadiness, and conviction infuse the early chapters of Neil's life with genuine heart. Tatreau makes Jaye feel fully lived-in, anchoring the opening arc with sincerity rather than sentimentality. Kohn brings strong, grounded vocals that give her scenes musical and emotional weight in equal measure.

In the show's more flamboyant corners, **Heidi Kettering** shines in dual roles as **Ellie Greenwich** and **Rose Diamond**, bringing comic brightness, maternal energy, and tonal lift to two very different figures. **Gene Weygandt**, playing **Fred Weintraub** and **Tommy O'Rourke**, injects the industry scenes with a mix of authority and wry humor.

One of the heaviest shadows in Neil's early career is cast by his first record label. **Michael Accardo**, as **Bert Berns / Kieve Diamond**, brings a predatory charm—smooth one moment, menacing the next. His presence sharpens the stakes behind songs audiences have long consumed as pure nostalgia.

But none of the narrative would hold without the right—**young Neil**. And **Nick Fradiani** is simply remarkable. His voice captures Diamond's unmistakable blend of gravel and velvet so precisely that at times, closing your eyes feels disorienting—as if time folds and the real Diamond briefly steps back into the room. Throughout the performance, you can feel the audience clocking the same realization in soft murmurs: *He sounds exactly like him*.

Fradiani doesn't mimic Diamond; he channels. And the musical soars because of it.

Four singers performing on stage with microphones while holding sheets of music. The scene is vibrant. Deirdre Dunkin, Ellen McGihon, Thabitha Moruthane, and Nick Fradiani as Neil. Photo credit: Jeremy Daniel.

A striking visual metaphor

One of the show's most effective sequences arrives in the touring montage—a musical accelerating glimpse into the cost of fame. Neil's jackets—and his hair—get bigger and bolder with every scene change, his stages expand, the lights sharpen, and the applause grows louder. The visual language is unmistakable: success as armor, spectacle as shield.

Juxtaposed against this glittering ascent is Marcia, framed in intimate pools of light, clutching a phone as each unanswered call wears thinner. Her world grows smaller as his grows impossibly large.

The moment is clean, wrenching, and honest. It doesn't ask the audience to forgive Diamond for the trade-offs he made; it simply asks them to see them. Fame here is not a villain, nor is it a triumph—it's a gravitational force that reshapes everyone caught in its orbit.

Where the show deepens, and where it hesitates

Two emotional throughlines linger: Diamond's lifelong devotion to performing and the insecurities that never fully loosened their grip. The musical doesn't shy from the contradictions—how a man who electrified arenas could still feel unsteady in his own skin.

The show gestures toward the darker contexts behind some of his brightest hits. "Sweet Caroline," for instance, is framed against a backdrop of fear, divorce, and mob-inflected pressure from his first label. It's one of the clearest glimpses into the emotional cost of producing a song that later became synonymous with joy. Still, the musical rarely lingers in those shadows long enough to let the ache settle.

The most notable omission is the near-silence around Diamond's Parkinson's diagnosis, which comes almost at the end, the defining reason he stepped away from touring. That chapter holds profound emotional stakes, and its absence leaves a narrative gap that could have grounded the entire show with greater resonance.

Another emotional layer the musical touches but never fully excavates is Diamond's lifelong struggle with depression—a battle he has spoken about candidly in interviews over the decades. The show hints at this inner landscape through moments like "Song Sung Blue," creative paralysis, and the quiet ache beneath his successes, but it rarely names the weight outright. Given how deeply depression shaped his writing—how many of his most buoyant songs were forged from private darkness—the absence of a more explicit exploration feels like another missed opportunity. A fuller reckoning with that tension could have enriched the musical's portrait of an artist whose brightest anthems were often the product of wrestling with his own shadows.

Instead, the therapy device shoulders much of the introspection. For some, it will feel intimate—a backstage pass into the emotional mechanics of a cultural icon. For others, it will feel repetitive, occasionally overstaying its welcome. The musical is self-aware enough to poke fun at itself (even Neil jokes about his reluctance to sit in therapy), but the device ultimately takes up space that could have been used to explore more of the artist's late-life reality.

Two male performers in stylish outfits face each other on stage, with a seated female figure in the background. Nick Fradiani as Neil. Robert Westenberg as Neil Now and Lisa Renee Pitts as Doctor. Photo credit: Jeremy Daniel.

Who this show is for

A Beautiful Noise knows its demographic, but its resonance extends beyond its fanbase. This musical will land most deeply with:

- **Neil Diamond loyalists and lifelong fans** — those who know the catalog by heart and feel history quicken in their chest when the first chords strike.
- **Musicians and performers** — anyone who understands the compulsions, costs, and contradictions of a life lived onstage.
- **Viewers drawn to psychological framing** — audiences who appreciate character-driven memoirs, emotional excavation, or stories shaped through reflection.
- **People who love the origin stories behind iconic songs** — especially those curious about how personal turmoil, industry pressure, and flashes of inspiration translate into the hits we assume just *appeared*.

Even those who arrive without nostalgia will still find something to hold on to, especially in the craftsmanship of the performances and the architecture of the songs.

A scene from a musical featuring a woman in a striped top and a blue skirt standing beside a desk, v
Kate A. Mulligan as Ellie Greenwich (left) and Nick Fradiani as Neil. (right). Photo credit:
Jeremy Daniel

A creative team with pedigree

While the performances give *A Beautiful Noise* its emotional pulse, the production's visual and musical world is shaped by a creative team with an unmistakable pedigree.

Tony Award-winner **Michael Mayer** directs with a steady, confident hand, allowing the show to move fluidly between intimacy and spectacle. Olivier Award-winner **Steven Hoggett** infuses even the simplest gestures with musicality—reminding us that Diamond's songs always lived as much in the body as in the voice.

The book, crafted by four-time Academy Award nominee **Anthony McCarten**, stitches together memory and melody through its therapeutic framework. Around that spine, a team of Broadway heavyweights builds the world:

- **Scenic Design:** David Rockwell — sleek, modular, and endlessly adaptable
- **Costume Design:** Emilio Sosa — sequins paired with surprising subtlety
- **Lighting Design:** Kevin Adams — sculpted atmospheres rather than mere illumination
- **Sound Design:** Jessica Paz — a crystalline landscape that honors Diamond's vocal timbre
- **Hair & Wigs:** Luc Verschueren — instantly recognizable silhouettes shaping decades in a glance

The music team amplifies that world with finesse. **Sonny Paladino's** supervision and arrangements, **Brian Usifer's** dance/incidental music, and **AnnMarie Milazzo's** vocal design create a sonic environment that evokes Diamond without slipping into impersonation. Orchestrations by **Bob Gaudio, Paladino**, and **Usifer** tie it all together with a reverence that feels earned rather than imitative.

Behind the scenes, tour leadership ensures the production arrives with Broadway polish while maintaining the adaptability demanded of a national run:

Austin Regan (Tour Director), **Yasmine Lee** (Tour Choreographer), and **James Olmstead** (Tour Music Director). It's a team whose experience shows.

Three performers on stage in a theatrical setting: a woman in a patterned jumpsuit dancing, a man s
Hannah Jewel Kohn as Marcia Murphey, Nick Fradiani. Tuck Milligan as Fred Weintraub.
Photo credit: Jeremy Daniel.

A show rooted in generosity

Beyond the footlights, *A Beautiful Noise* extends its reach in ways that move beyond nostalgia or theatrical tribute. The production has raised more than **\$750,000 for the Parkinson's Foundation**, a gesture that quietly honors the man at its center and the illness that reshaped the final years of his performing career.

It's a philanthropic thread that deepens the show's resonance. While the musical doesn't dwell on Diamond's diagnosis, this real-world commitment acknowledges it with dignity—an act of care that mirrors the sincerity embedded in his songwriting. It's a reminder that the celebration unfolding onstage isn't purely retrospective; it's a living, communal act of generosity.

Final cadence

No, *A Beautiful Noise* isn't here to reinvent the jukebox musical. It doesn't need to. What it offers instead—especially in the sweep of Eccles Theater—is something tender, almost devotional: a shimmering tribute to an artist who wrote joy out of fear, anthems out of uncertainty, and melodies that slipped across generations without asking permission.

For longtime fans, it's a love letter.
For newcomers, an unexpected education.
And for all of us, just for a few bright hours, the good times felt so good.

Ticket Information

A Beautiful Noise runs **January 20–25, 2026** at **Eccles Theater** in Salt Lake City. Tickets are available at Broadway-At-The-Eccles.com or by calling **801-355-2787 (ARTS)**.

An additional performance has been added on **Thursday, January 22 at 1:00 PM**.

Performance Schedule

- **Wed, Jan 21** at 7:00 PM
- **Thu, Jan 22** at 1:00 PM (*added performance*)
- **Thu, Jan 22** at 7:00 PM
- **Fri, Jan 23** at 7:30 PM
- **Sat, Jan 24** at 1:00 PM
- **Sat, Jan 24** at 7:30 PM
- **Sun, Jan 25** at 1:00 PM
- **Sun, Jan 25** at 6:30 PM

Ticket Prices

(Ranges vary by performance and seat location)
\$45–\$145 depending on section (Balcony to Orchestra premium).

Accessibility Performances

- **ASL Interpreted:** Thu, Jan 22 at 7:00 PM
Recommended seating: Orchestra Left (Rows D–H)
- **Audio Description:** Fri, Jan 23 at 7:30 PM
Devices available in the main lobby

- **Captioned Performance:** Sat, Jan 24 at 1:00 PM
Closed captioning available from any seat; open captions near Orchestra Right

[Tickets](#)

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