

Eastbourne Herald

Talented EODS capture the rock musical magic

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

Devonshire Park Theatre
Continues Friday/Saturday
Review by Roger Paine

When this rock musical, with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics by Tim Rice, first appeared in album form in 1970 it took the entertainment world by storm.

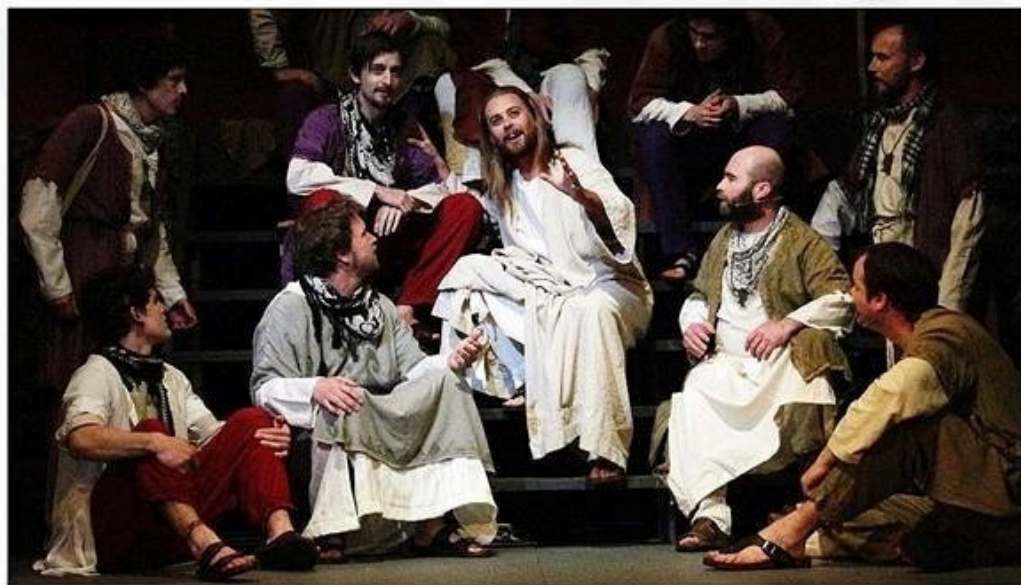
The effect of this latest production by Eastbourne Operatic and Dramatic Society is no less powerful.

Neil Sellman, on his directorial debut, has captured the intensity of the original and introduced some innovative touches of his own.

Together with Carl Greenwood's musical direction from the keyboard, which powers its way through many changing styles, Oli Briant's electric guitar is outstanding, they have produced a rock opera which stands worthy comparison to anything that has gone before.

The story, in effect an Easter Passion Play, covers the Bible story from the time of Jesus's denunciation to his crucifixion on the Cross.

All the principal perform-



ers interpret their roles with striking effect.

None more so than Gareth Brighton as Judas Iscariot who from his opening "Heaven on Their Minds" to the closing eponymous "Superstar", when Jesus is mocked by a vision of Judas, gives a faultless performance.

The same applies to Nathan Morris as Jesus. Particularly in his "Gethsemane" at the end of the first act and the realistic agony he depicts when suffering 39 lashes or-

dered by Pilate, played with grim viciousness by Richard Locke.

As Mary Magdalene, Sam Summerbell's singing, notably in "Everything's Alright" and "Could We Start Again Please?", is as sensitive as it is captivating.

Caiaphas (James Bell), Annas (Clem Jackson) and the two Priests (Mick Woodhams and Nick Reynolds) are strikingly forbidding, and Herod (Dave Nicholls) is spirited and decadent especially

when taunting Jesus with a ragtime number in "King Herod's Song".

With exuberant singing and dancing from the ensemble players, choreographed by Nikki Leach on a starkly effective set, and promoted with a clever representation by the cast of Leonardo da Vinci's painting The Last Supper, this was a hugely uplifting production.

Picture by Paul Spink