

Hollywood rents this new classic, with mixed results

The movie 'Rent,' based on the musical of the same name, features most of the cast members from the original Broadway production reprising their roles

BY KRISTEN GERHARD
PULSE REPORTER

There's a group of people, a phenomenon in our country, affectionately referred to as "Rentheads." Chances are you're friends or at least acquaintances with one of these individuals. They're often characterized by ownership of certain memorabilia, such as a two-disc soundtrack from the original Broadway musical that opened in 1996; a cast poster that looks like an abstract Technicolor version of the Brady Bunch; or more than one ticket stub from the show, proof that they are a true "Rent" aficionado.

Proponents of the new film adaptation of "Rent," which hit theaters last week, will more than likely be composed of members from this sect. However, whether a fan of the original musical or not, audience members will probably leave this film feeling more than a bit bewildered. This is not to say they will certainly like or dislike the film, but some confusion about what happened to them during the past 135 minutes of their life will undoubtedly be present.

"Rent," originally written by Jonathan Larson and based loosely on Puccini's opera "La Boheme," tells the story of seven friends living in New York City's East Village in a time period that, while undetermined, seems to be somewhere in the '80s. Upon its release, the musical was both heralded and scorned for its unabashed portrayal of AIDS, homosexuality, drug use and the counterculture lifestyle of alternative musicians, independent filmmakers and abstract stage performers.

What excited most Rentheads about the film adaptation was that the main characters in it would be revived by almost all of the original Broadway cast. Indeed,

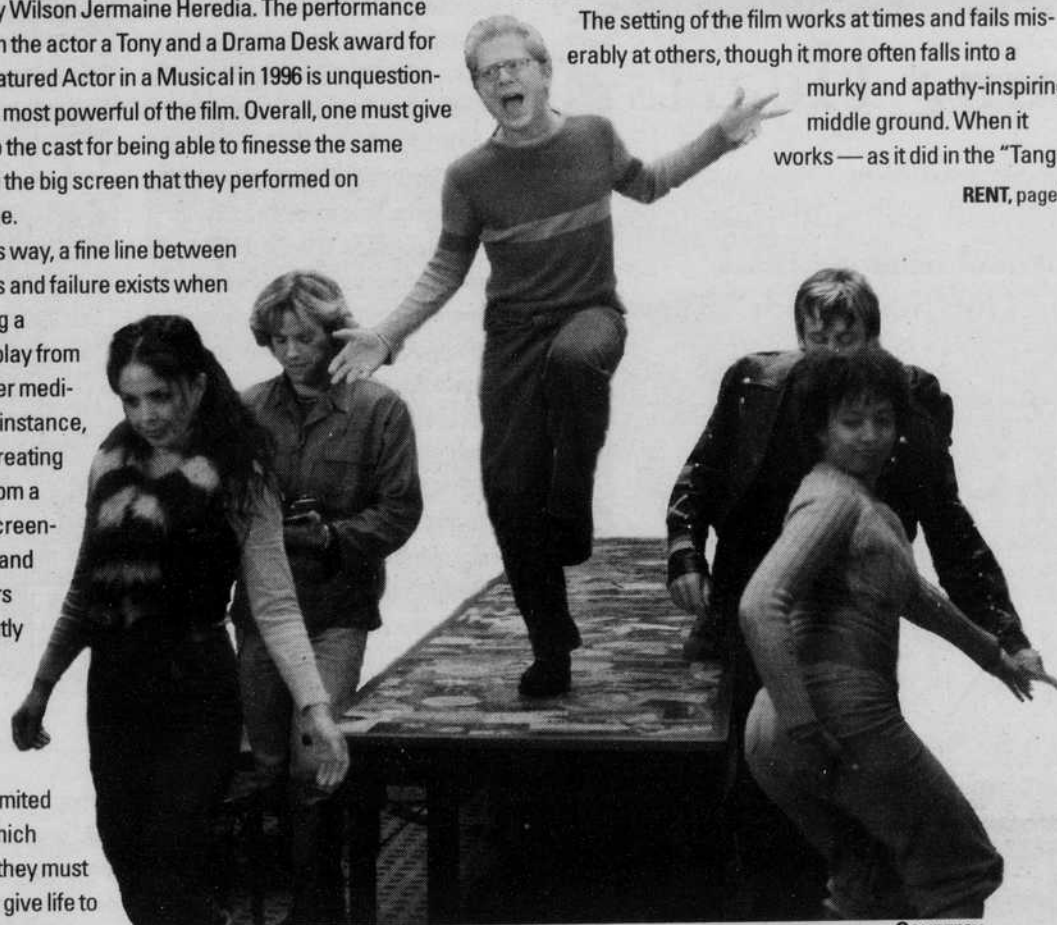
the heart these actors and actresses brought to their roles was palpable. Most noteworthy was the portrayal of Angel Dumott Schunard, a transgender street performer with AIDS, by Wilson Jermaine Heredia. The performance that won the actor a Tony and a Drama Desk award for Best Featured Actor in a Musical in 1996 is unquestionably the most powerful of the film. Overall, one must give credit to the cast for being able to finesse the same roles on the big screen that they performed on the stage.

In this way, a fine line between success and failure exists when adapting a screenplay from any other medium. For instance, when creating a film from a book, screenwriters and directors frequently grapple with the problem of limited time, which means they must learn to give life to only the most

vivid of scenes and sift out only the most important plot points. When moving from the theater to film, however, the challenges are quite different. Characters must be toned down from their ostentatious stage versions to be more believable, and they must be able to move in settings that were once unembellished in the playhouse but have become a real world with all its complexities on the screen.

The setting of the film works at times and fails miserably at others, though it more often falls into a murky and apathy-inspiring middle ground. When it works — as it did in the "Tango

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COURTESY

PULSE PICKS

This week the Pulse staff picks the Top 5 media releases of 2005



AMY LICHTY
PULSE EDITOR

1. "Scrubs" — Seasons 1 and 2
2. "The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou"
3. "Sin City"
4. Jack Johnson — "In Between Dreams"
5. Radar Magazine



TREVOR DAVIS
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1. "Good Night, and Good Luck"
2. "The Colbert Report"
3. Bill Watterson — "The Complete Calvin and Hobbes"
4. Beck — "Guero"
5. "Lost" — The Complete First Season



ANDREW MCCOLLUM
PULSE REPORTER

1. "Resident Evil 4"
2. The Hold Steady — "Seperation Sunday"
3. Broken Social Scene — "S/T"
4. Kanye West — "Late Registration"
5. "A History of Violence"



KRISTEN GERHARD
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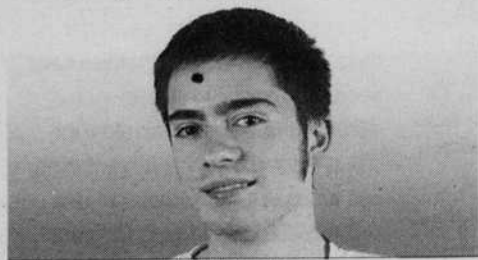
1. J.K. Rowling — "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince"
2. Murs and Slug — "Felt 2: A Tribute to Lisa Bonet"
3. "South Park" — Season Six
4. "Sin City"
5. HBO miniseries "Rome"



MATT TIFFANY
PULSE COPY EDITOR

1. "Batman Begins"
2. "Wallace & Grommit and the Curse of Were-Rabbit"
3. "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire"
4. Iron & Wine — "Woman King EP"
5. Fiona Apple — "Extraordinary Machine"

In my opinion



TREVOR DAVIS
STAY CLASSY

'The Real World' killed the music video star

Once Dave passes out after a few too many drinks, his friend Mike dresses him up in women's clothing. Mike takes pictures and posts them on the Internet.

What does Dave do to seek revenge? He calls up Ryan Dunn.

Welcome to the world of MTV. The new show "Homewrecker" is hosted by Dunn, who became famous after appearing on the MTV shows "Jack-ass" and "Viva La Bam." Dunn helps friends get revenge by redecorating rooms in a notorious fashion. Mike's room gets turned into a spa, complete with a woman getting her corns removed and a man relaxing in a mud bath.

The picture leaves MTV viewers wondering where the music went.

MTV was launched in August 1981 by Warner Amex Satellite Entertainment Company, when creators thought music videos would be a low-cost form of advertising for record companies.

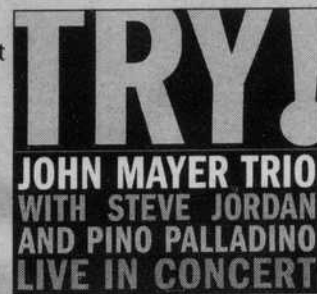
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John Mayer Trio, "Try!": Too many musicians fell off the deep end this year and failed to satisfy loyal fans with their new releases. These artists seemed to have lost touch with their roots and instead attempted to please the masses rather than the fans that have been around since the beginning. Thank goodness John Mayer did not follow that path.

John Mayer is best known as a pop star. He began his journey into stardom with the sugary "Room for Squares," followed by 2003's "Heavier Things." True fans of Mayer's — the ones who appreciate him acoustic and live and really can't listen to "Room for Squares" because it induces vomiting with its cheesy background vocals and horrible poppy beats — should welcome "Try!" the first release from the John Mayer Trio. Mayer has finally released the album true fans have been anticipating since the beginning: a bluesy, live recording with a delightful mixture of classics like Ray Charles' "I Got A Woman" and Jimi Hendrix's "Wait Until Tomorrow," as well as new favorites such as "Vultures" and "Good Love is on the Way." And for those who can't quite let go of Mayer as a solo artist, he performs his well-loved hit "Daughters" as one of the encores.

"Try!" follows the exact set list that the John Mayer Trio played at the Roseland Theatre in Portland at the beginning of September, and with good reason. The songs flow nicely into one another, and for those lucky enough to have caught the show live, it brings back a flood of memories of seeing an amazing trio of musicians playing their hearts out. With talented bassist Pino Palladino — who has jammed with such legends as Eric Clapton, The Who and BB King — and mind-blowing drummer Steve Jordan — who has rocked out with Bob Dylan, Cat Stevens and the Rolling Stones — the John Mayer Trio is composed of amazing musicians who truly know what they're doing. Pick up "Try!" today and let it take you in a new direction of musical appreciation.

—Amy Lichty



INSIDE PULSE



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