



Deena (Beyoncé Knowles), Effie (Jennifer Hudson) and Lorrell (Anika Noni Rose) in *Dreamgirls*

Dreams A Go-Go

Motown movie musical has it all.

DREAMGIRLS: Directed by Bill Condon. Written by Condon (screenplay) and Tom Eyrn (book). Cinematography, Tobias A. Schliessler. Starring Jamie Foxx, Beyoncé Knowles, Eddie Murphy, Danny Glover and Jennifer Hudson. Paramount Pictures and DreamWorks SKG, 2007. PG-13. 131 minutes. ★★★★★

Broadway musicals adapted by Hollywood tend to be very good (*Grease*, *Chicago*) or very bad (*A Chorus Line*, *The Phantom of the Opera*). When you consider the built-in audience of a Broadway hit, which might run for more than a decade, extreme opinions of an adaptation aren't surprising. And given the nature of Broadway productions — the complex staging, lighting and choreography involved — a failure is apt to be a big failure, while a success gets proclaimed an instant classic.

Whether it's an instant classic is debatable, but *Dreamgirls* is an overwhelming success. Adapted from the 1981 musical, which itself was inspired by the success of The Supremes, *Dreamgirls* is a non-stop musical thrill ride from early R&B to disco. But this isn't your father's musical: Here, swirling cameras create euphoric dance sequences while, during critical plot points, spoken dialogue and singing alternate. Unlike *Grease* or even *Chicago*, the songs in *Dreamgirls* aren't based in narrative-puncturing fantasy, à la "Beauty School Dropout." In *Dreamgirls*, the lyrical content directly addresses and advances the story. The more integrated music gives *Dreamgirls* a seamless feel.

Dreamgirls is the story of Curtis Taylor, Jr. (Jamie Foxx), a car salesman who rises to fame as the manager of James Early (Eddie Murphy) and his backup talent, the Dreamettes. For a short time, they're a modestly successful musical family. But after James gyrates wickedly in front of a stunned white audience — this is, after all, the early

'60s — Curtis renames the girls the Dreams in order to promote them on their own. It's one of many cutthroat moves by Curtis, whom Foxx underplays as a villain with almost no inner conflict. Curtis is a force that lacks vigor. Murphy, on the other hand, gives his best performance ever. After 25 years of hit-and-miss comedy, Eddie Murphy is finally a great supporting actor.

The central conflict of the film emerges when Curtis replaces Effie (Jennifer Hudson), the established lead vocalist, with Deena (Beyoncé Knowles). Deena, younger and prettier than Effie, can't sing like Effie can, so Effie reluctantly disembarks. A run of unprecedented success follows, but not without a price. Curtis, resembling an Ike Turnerish control freak, gradually pushes Deena (now his wife) away. Knowles is graceful and nuanced here, seeming comfortable in every scene. But the film belongs to Hudson, the former *American Idol* runner-up, whose arrival (*Dreamgirls* is her first film) is already being compared to that of Streisand and Midler, two legends who also arrived fully formed.

What *Dreamgirls* lacks, if anything, is consistency of energy and pace. After an efficient, up-tempo start, the film breezes through the last five years of the Dreams' remarkable career. Along the way, director Condon (*Gods and Monsters*) tries to establish a context of social upheaval, but the acknowledgement of riots, MLK and racial disharmony feels tacked on to give the story weight. *Dreamgirls* isn't built to carry that load: Weightlessness, the sheer joy of performing, is the natural state of this musical fantasia. It's the celluloid version of opening a bottle of champagne. While Curtis's ambition and pride cost them all dearly, the film is about how passion makes up for talent, and how very little is beyond forgiveness. **EW**



**Barry's
Espresso
Bakery & Deli**

*Jewish Inspired
Neighborhood
Favorites*

Campus
12th & Alder
(541) 343-1141

Southtowne Shoppes
28th & Oak
(541) 343-6444



1623 21st St. Suite B
Springfield, OR 97477

(541) 744-8743

www.thecapricedayspa.com



Monday - Saturday
10am - 8pm

Massage	Tanning
Facials	Sauna
Body Wraps	Nails
Waxing	Shower



Bodhi Path Karma Kagyu Buddhist Center presents

Vast Mind - Precise Action
Buddhist Practice in Daily Life

Lecture: Vast Mind - Precise Action
1-27-07, 3-5pm • University of Oregon, Lillis Hall, Rm 111

Class: Meditation - It is not what you think
1-28-07, 3-5pm • Hilyard Community Center, Main Hall

Teacher Lama Julia studied under the Tibetan master Gendun Rinpoche in France and accomplished 3 cycles of the traditional 3-year meditation retreat.

Visit bodhipath.org or call (541) 515-2598 for more info.
Suggested Donation, \$10 per class. Space is limited.

★ high priestess piercing & HPP INK ★

HIGH PRIESTESS TATTOO

New hours!

By popular demand we have finally changed our hours.

Our main shop at 675 Lincoln will now be opening earlier every morning at 11am.

Our new shop on 13th & Ferry will now be open later to help get your late night freak on!

SEE COUPONS @ THE SURVIVAL KIT.COM

675 LINCOLN ST 342-6585
525 E. 13TH AVE 343-3311