

Cash captured in 'Walk the Line'

Andrew Prince
Reviewer

"Walk the Line" is an absorbing biopic about the late, great Johnny Cash. This film reminded me a lot of last year's "Ray," the parallels between Cash's life and Ray Charles' in their respective films are almost scary. They both came from very humble families, both tragically lost their brother and were haunted by it, both suffered from drug addiction. "Walk the Line" is completely devoted to Cash's story; we do not see how his fame grows as much as how his life changes and how the people around him change.

Joaquin Phoenix ("Gladiator," "Signs") plays Johnny Cash and the performance is probably up to par with Jamie Foxx's performance as Ray Charles, which was great. When I saw "Ray," I completely forgot it was Foxx playing Charles and thought I was watching Ray Charles himself. I cannot honestly say the same thing happened when I saw "Walk the Line," not that Phoenix's performance was not convinc-

ing, it was very much so, but Foxx did something special to completely envelop himself in the character of Charles. Having said that, Phoenix's performance might be more impressive if you consider that he actually sings all of Cash's songs himself, no lip-syncing, which is something Mr. Foxx cannot say that he did.

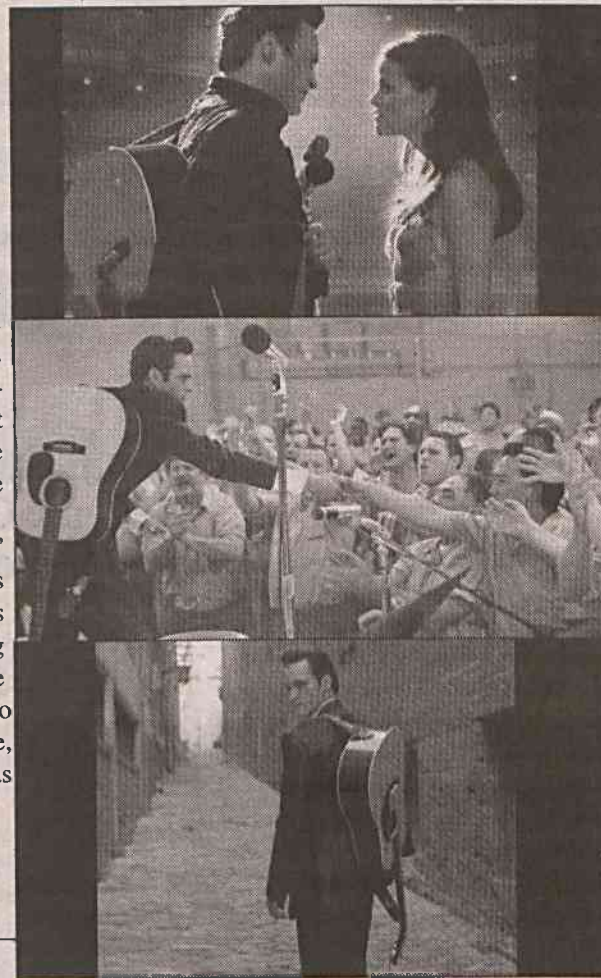
Reese Witherspoon ("Sweet Home Alabama") plays Cash's love interest, June Carter, and she is one of the most likable characters in the film. She is charming and witty, but vulnerable and sensitive. She is not liked by a lot of the public because of her two failed marriages, but loved by just as many because of her voice. Witherspoon also does all of the singing in this film herself.

The movie starts in 1968 in the prison where Cash would make a best selling album. We are taken back to 1944 when Cash was just a boy on his father's farm. It was then that a tragedy occurred that would haunt Johnny through adulthood. Later on, he would find Vivian (Ginnifer Goodwin) just before he went off to

serve in the Air Force in Germany, where he wrote some of his songs. He eventually marries and has children with her. It is kind of fascinating to see Johnny's relationship with Vivian unravel; she seems willing to tolerate Johnny's busy schedule and his drug problems, but eventually it is June that causes Vivian to leave, in a scene that is a good example of pure film.

Like "Ray," "Walk the Line" works in a lot of ways: its story, its performances, the music. It is absorbing, too. After watching this film, I wanted to know more about Johnny Cash, I wanted to hear his music, it made me care, and Joaquin Phoenix really has that voice down.

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