

Stage-Born 'Chicago' Melds to Screen

By MICHELLE JARBOE
Staff Writer

Applauding a film may be considered a theater faux pas but Rob Marshall's on-screen version of "Chicago" merits myriad accolades.

Musical theater breached the movie genre with a bang when "Chicago" hit select theaters earlier this month. Perhaps the 2001 success of "Moulin Rouge" paved the way for other musicals-turned-movies to make some headway — but the two films take place on entirely different imaginative stages.



"Chicago" ★★★★★

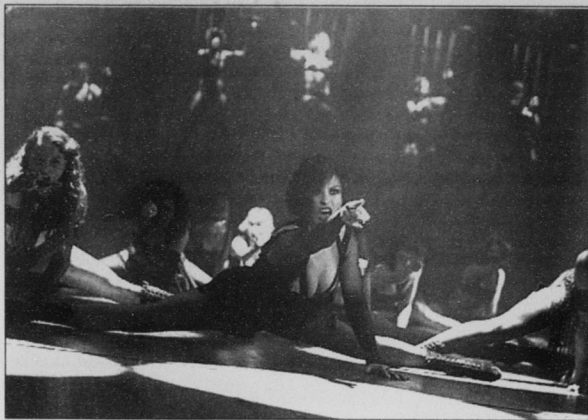


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Catherine Zeta-Jones plays the singing, dancing murderess Velma Kelly in Rob Marshall's screen interpretation of the classic musical "Chicago."

First written in 1926, "Chicago" was brought to Broadway by the acclaimed Bob Fosse in 1975. Revived in 1996, this story of murder, mayhem and music in the Roaring '20s proved both pertinent and captivating to stage audiences.

"Chicago" is the story of Velma Kelly (Catherine Zeta-Jones) and Roxie Hart (Renée Zellweger), respectively an established jazz performer and a wannabe trying to sleep her way onto the stage. Having murdered her wayward husband and sister, Velma lands on murderesses' row. Soon after, Roxie shoots her boyfriend and joins Velma in jail.

The two murderesses gain fame as playboy lawyer Billy Flynn (Richard Gere) takes their cases.

Zellweger mixes cute with sexy in a dynamite performance, making Roxie much unlike the actress' subdued character in "White Oleander," her most recent film. Despite a lack of prior singing and dancing experience, Zellweger masters the film's choreography and feeds life to numbers both dramatic and explosive.

Seemingly an odd choice for the jazzy-sexy musical, Gere is properly slimy as manipulative lawyer Billy Flynn. In songs like the courtroom number "Razzle Dazzle," Gere takes the

focus off surrounding characters and proves he's in the right place.

But the real show-stealer in "Chicago" is Zeta-Jones, whose looks, voice, dancing and charisma make the movie a success. Voluptuous, deep-voiced, sultry and prickly, she ties the film to the lauded musical, much as the sequencing and choreography tip their hats to Fosse's stylings.

With many numbers framed as dream sequences and taking place on a black screen, "Chicago" smacks of Fosse without losing believability as a film. Unfortunately, some original songs were cut, making the film a comfortable feature-length — but the music remains both over-the-top and sensational.

"Cell Block Tango," in particular, honors Fosse's choreography and musical spirit while emerging as a stunning on-screen number. This angry chorus from the six murderesses on death row sparkles with sexuality and humor as the women brazenly justify the murders of their lovers or spouses.

Supporting cast members also add musical shine to "Chicago." Queen Latifah takes the role of Matron "Mama" Morton and stuns the stage with "When You're Good to Mama," a rippling, blatantly sexual number.

And John C. Reilly, of "Magnolia" and "Boogie Nights," steps out as Roxie's jilted and ignored husband, Amos. Singing the famous "Mr. Cellophane," Kelly proves Marshall's casting impeccable — from starlets to supporting actors.

Despite the challenge of bringing a musical to the multiplex, Marshall created a film version of "Chicago" with pizzazz and style. With a faultless cast and ties to the great Fosse, the film not only successfully translates from the stage to the screen but succeeds in bringing the feeling and flair of the musical with it.

By all means, applaud.

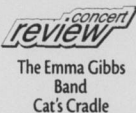
The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Emma Gibbs Band Populist, Predictable

By GREY HUDDLESTON
Staff Writer

The Emma Gibbs Band, a group of country-rock road warriors from Winston-Salem, proved its mettle Friday night with a solid performance at a nearly empty Cat's Cradle.

While the show suffered from a lack of variety and spice, the band persevered with aplomb and with admirable tenacity.



The Emma Gibbs Band Cat's Cradle Friday, Jan. 10 ★★★★★

But it must be noted that two significant problems faced the group before it ever even took the stage: a surprising lack of attendance for a Friday night show at the Cradle — a discouraging prospect for any band — and an ill-suited introduction from an opening act that played music in a distinctly different vein, surprising what viewers there were at the venue.

One Year Later, a five-piece pop-rock group from Charlotte, opened the show with a set of tightly constructed but unoriginal rock 'n' roll songs.

Despite this out-of-context introduction, the Emma Gibbs Band took the

stage with confidence, immediately displaying its best and most noticeable feature — a unique instrumentation and sound.

On top of the rhythm-section trio of drummer Lauren Myers, bassist Bill Reynolds and guitarist Richard Upchurch, the group added Will Straughan on mandolin and lap steel, with Brent Buckner on harmonica for a deeper, more textured feel.

The latter two musicians both defined the band's organic tone and contributed the most dynamic and musically impressive playing of the evening.

The group's sound was an effective blend of country, folk and bluegrass, all set within the frame of rock sensibility. Vocal delivery was impressive, with Straughan and Upchurch taking turns singing lead and backup parts, weaving in and out of each other.

Both men have clear, sweet tenor voices. Their harmonized lines in many of the choruses conveyed bittersweet nostalgia for an era past.

But the performance began to suffer after an hour as the band exhausted its songbook and subsequently its ability to perform songs that sounded distinct from one another.

The musical catalog seemed to consist purely of two-beat bluegrass-inspired

numbers and slower folk-rock tunes. Both formulas worked well at first but were abused in the end.

Lyrical, the band suffered from the same malady — an obsession with motion and travel characterized too much of the songwriting. Repeated images of trains, highways and loneliness at first sounded mature but became contrived by the end.

The vibe of the entire show was encapsulated in the lyrics "I've got my motor running/I've got miles under my wheels," or "I've come a long, long way/ But I know I've got a long, long way to go."

But even formulaic songwriting couldn't ruin the evening, as the band displayed its apathy for attendance. The band's unique aesthetic was traditional but with a relevant, modern edge. The emotions the group expressed were real, even if they weren't particularly diverse.

The Emma Gibbs Band is not a group of flashy performers, but its travels have increased its credibility.

Underneath the weariness lies an enviable wisdom about music, art and people.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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Wacky, Wonderful 'Adaptation' Defies Conventional Movie Logic

By BRIAN MILLIKIN
Senior Writer

"Adaptation" might be the most daring adaptation of any book ever brought to the screen. That said, it's easily one of the best films of the year and surely the most delightfully clever.

It comes from the refreshingly absurd and fertile imaginations of screenwriter Charlie Kaufman and director Spike Jonze. They last teamed up for "Being John Malkovich," an ingenious and twisted marvel in its own right. Yet "Adaptation" makes "Malkovich" seem plain and tall by comparison.



"Adaptation" ★★★★★

Kaufman was asked to write a screenplay of Susan Orlean's "The Orchid Thief," a nonfiction book chronicling the obsession of a Florida flower poacher. But Kaufman struggled with the task, going so far as to mutate his screenplay into the story of his struggle to adapt the book. And that's the film we're now watching.

"Adaptation" revels in itself, ripping apart its source material and becoming a movie about itself. We're actually watching the movie that the characters in "Adaptation" are fighting mightily to produce. Or are we?

Part of the sharp charm of "Adaptation" is that nothing's certain. Nicolas Cage offers a performance so bleakly hilarious and painful that he finally seems to have deserved his Oscar. He plays both Charlie and his identical twin brother, the hyper-confident Donald — who doesn't exist in real life but who is credited with co-writing the screenplay. Meryl Streep, liberated as Orlean, and Chris Cooper, a ranting and raving revelation as orchid thief John Laroche, have a decidedly different relationship in "Adaptation" as they did in real life.

Cooper, a journeyman character actor, nearly steals the movie from Cage — that's quite a feat, considering that Cage embodies two fully realized characters, a remarkable acting coup that never falters. But Cooper is that commanding in his career's most bizarre role. He transforms himself as the filthy, toothless and strangely brainy everyman with scars to spare. It was a stroke of brilliant casting by Jonze, choosing the dramatic Cooper for such a comical role.

The normally strait-laced Streep shows a real flair for the absurdist comedy as well, displaying a knack for comic timing as the curious, conflicted author. It's a credit to Streep's familiar and free performance that the audience cares so much for Orlean, who behaves in a way so different from the real Orlean that a lawsuit would've been understandable.

The mind-bending doesn't end there

— the film is a kaleidoscope of inside jokes, each more amusing than the one before. In one scene, Charlie decides he's adverse to voice-over narration in his screenplay, and from that point on, there's no more narration in "Adaptation" either.

But the film exists outside of its cleverness, too. The actors inject their trapeze act with a deep heart, and the overweight, confidence-cracked Charlie emerges as an emotional hero, battling his integrity and looking for love around every corner and on every page. We root for him, especially when his world starts caving in as his film concludes.

Much of the flak that "Adaptation" has taken focuses on its conclusion, with more than a few critics claiming Kaufman doesn't know how to end a story. But it says absolutely nothing about the greatness of "Adaptation" to note that its final act is wretched — a dramatic train wreck, really — because it's designed that way. The film is literally about the collision between the conclusion and the rest of the film.

Like its ending, "Adaptation" is gloriously self-indulgent entertainment. Kaufman fought with himself to create something, and in the process he created something of everything — a sarcastic, melancholic comedy that's equal parts cold Hollywood exposé, warm love story and stark portrait of writer's block.

The miracle of "Adaptation" is that it works, like a mirror turned to face another mirror, spiraling and stumbling ever closer to some truth and more than a little heart — and getting there in less than two hours.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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By Caroline Lindsey

David Mamet, "Writing in Restaurants" The Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright (of "Glengarry Ross" fame) showcases a collection of essays equally riveting as his work for the stage. Whether he's poking fun at the fine art of bitchiness or at ridiculous human rituals, Mamet's anecdotes are filled to the brim with humor and introspection. His witty prose sears deep into the heart of both human idiosyncrasy and idiosyncrasy, and the essays are bound to be a fun read — even in a restaurant.

Sigur Rós, *Ágætis Byrjun* and () There's a lot more coming out of Iceland than Bjork these days, and electronic chamber pop group Sigur Rós is a fine example. It matters not that the title of the latest LP is an unpronounceable pair of parentheses — the music speaks for itself. Synthesizers, guitars and organs sound like they've just arrived from another planet, dominating with aching beauty. It's cutting-edge background music at the least, but ultimately these opium-laced epics leave one with no choice but to hit play once more.

Caroline Lindsey can be reached at clind@email.unc.edu.

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Applications for the seven at-large positions on the DTH Editor Selection Board are available at the DTH Office and the Carolina Union info desk kiosk.

Applicants must be available for an orientation meeting from 5-6pm Thursday, February 27 and from approximately 8:30am-4pm Saturday, March 1 to conduct interviews and make the selection.

All students may apply for at-large positions except current DTH news staff members. If you have any questions about the process, please contact Kim Minugh (962-4086, Kminugh@email.unc.edu) or Janet Gallagher-Cassel (962-0520, jgcassel@email.unc.edu).

Deadlines: Friday, Feb. 14th