

'Chicago' gives them the ol' razzle-dazzle

by Daniel J. Stasiewski
A&E Editor

There's just something about a character breaking into spontaneous song that exemplifies the ultimate fantasy of the cinema world. Last year, I was spellbound by Baz Luhrmann's extravagant movie-musical "Moulin Rouge" and all its melodic mania. The glamour of that Parisian dance hall at the turn of the century can also be found in a 1920s Chicago jazz club.

While "Chicago," the Broadway production turned movie-musical, is no Luhrmann-style love story, its appeal is easily found in the wild cynicism. Flamboyant song-and-dance numbers and glittery, barely-there costumes bring this brassy satire to the screen with all the flash the show deserves.

After shooting her deceitful lover, the adulterous murderess, Roxie Hart (Renee Zellweger), is sent to the state prison. With the noose tightening around her neck, Roxie's dreams of lighting up the stage seem unlikely, but her story takes a showy turn when she meets the jailhouse cast of characters.

There's Velma Valentine (Catherine Zeta-Jones), the former jazz club starlet, who murdered her husband and sister when she caught them doing "the old spread eagle." Velma's outside celebrity is just as apparent in prison as her close dealings with the jailhouse head Mama Morton (Queen Latifah) put



Renee Zellweger puts on a show in 'Chicago'

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her on the fast track to freedom.

The male lead in the prison production goes to Velma's fast-talking, conniver of a lawyer Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). Flynn's presence at the jail leads to a meeting with Roxie where he sees the rising star as a deeper tragedy and a bigger headline. The ringmaster of the courtroom circus soon dumps Velma's fading celebrity and trains Roxie in the ways of judicial show business.

"Chicago" is the type of film that triggers a smile and never allows it to fade. The moment the band

leader (played by Taye Diggs) introduces Velma Valentine and the intimidating charisma of her flash and fervor gives way to the first line of "All That Jazz," you are hooked. Last year's "Moulin Rouge" needed trust and about 20 minutes to prove its significance. Instead, "Chicago" seduces within moments and there's no getting away.

After the first dazzling dance number, the film starts dishing out hardy doses of sarcasm. One of the "Merry Murderesses" as they are called describes her husband's murder with, "He ran into

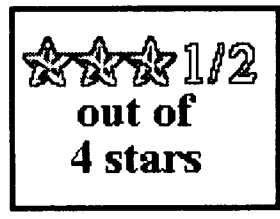
my knife. He ran into my knife TEN TIMES." This saucy attitude is brilliantly delivered by each and every cast member.

Of course, "Chicago" stars Zeta-Jones, Zellweger, and an extremely surprising Gere, all of whom are tremendous, but there's no question about the stand-out cast member. It's Queen Latifah. The rapper-turned-actress deals a double dose of hilarity every time she's on screen. Her showy musical number, "When You're Good to Mama," is the highlight of the film.

Behind the swank and sizzle of the cast and the film is debut director Rob Marshall. His amazing choreography is sure to make him the must-have musical film director in the years to come.

Marshall's inexperience with shooting a feature film is still quite apparent. "Chicago" sometimes feels like a live taping of a stage production, but there's no doubt an Oscar nomination (at least) will be in his future.

I never really wondered what "L.A. Confidential" would have been like if it was a musical, but "Chicago" showed me, anyway. The corruption, the sarcasm, the flashy spectacle motivated by the darkest themes, this movie is fun as hell. It's been 35 years since a musical won the Oscar for Best Picture, but the razzle-dazzle of "Chicago" might just change all that.



"Chicago" starring Renee Zellweger, Catherine Zeta-Jones, and Richard Gere and directed by Rob Marshall is currently showing at Tinseltown.

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Rap artists take over clothing and film industries

by Olivia Page
Staff Writer

nine platinum plus albums. These albums have sold more than 19 million units.

Jay-Z has a business side also. He owns a share of Roc-a-Fella Records, Roc-a-Wear and Roc-a-Fella Films. Jay-Z is now completing a shoe contract with Reebok called the "S. Carter Collection by RBK." This shoe line will go into advertisement in February and will be released this upcoming June.

Eminem, also known as Slim Shady, has also decided to go into the fashion industry with Shady Sportswear. Shady Sportswear will be in stores this fall.

Eve, the First Lady of the Ruff Ryders, has co-starred in the recent movie "Barbershop." Now, she has plans for a UPN television show that is as yet untitled. She will star as a fashion designer. She also has developed a clothing line called "Fetish" due in stores soon.

There are many other rap artists participating in the fashion industry including Trina, Ice-T, Beanie Sigel, Lil' Romeo, Nelly, and Ja Rule.

Trina has "Diamond Princess Wear" in stores now. Ice-T will have "Ice Wear" in stores by July. Beanie Sigel will soon release "State Property Wear." Lil' Romeo will be following his father's (Master P) footsteps with "P. Miller Shorties." This is a clothing line under Master P's "P. Miller" which is in stores now. Nelly has "Vokal" clothing in stores now, and Ja Rule is planning on releasing a clothing line called "Mogul."

Run DMC were the first rappers to have their picture on the cover of "Rolling Stone". Now entire magazines are devoted to rap music, such as the Source. Run DMC were the first rap artist to have videos played on MTV. MTV now has the video show "Hip Hop Countdown" which is strictly for rap music. MTV also has TRL, which counts down top 10 songs in the country, including many by rap artists.

Among the rappers going into the fashion industry and/or film is Jay-Z, also known as Shawn Carter. Jay-Z has a total of

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Run DMC set the stage for the rap take over of today.

Rap artists are reaping platinum sales, such as Nelly with his album "Nellyville," and Eminem with "8 Mile." Rappers are also inspiring their own clothing lines. This new clothing line "trend" involves a number of different rap artists.

The movie and clothing line trend began with rappers Run DMC, who put rap on national charts in the mid 1980s. This trio triumphed as the first rap artist to go gold Run DMC, platinum King of Rock, and multi-platinum Raising Hell records. They later appeared in movies, endorsed Adidas shoes, and a clothing line.

Following Run's fashion line, urban clothing lines such as Wu Tang Clan's "Wu Wear" and P.Diddy's "Sean Jean" succeeded. As fans of Run DMC mourn the passing of Jam Master Jay, who was killed on Oct. 30, 2002, they remember Run DMC's legacy as one group that opened the doors for rap artists, outside of music.

Run DMC's clothing line idea is sweeping the rap industry. During the past few months, rappers have introduced to their fans a clothing line that replicates the artist taste. Other rappers are in the process of continuing this "trend."