

# ENTERTAINMENT

## Rock and Roll with TNB

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Stories about Generation X and any subsequent aspects of the generation are good bases for film, theatre and books. Perhaps one of the best known aspects of generational differences, is music; specifically rock and roll. This genre has been successfully illustrated in TNB's fourth play of its 1995-1996 season, John Gray's *Rock and Roll*.

*Rock and Roll* is a musical set in the small backwoods town of Mushaboom, Nova Scotia. It is a musical that follows the lives of five young people who had a dream; a dream to be in a rock and roll band. Starting from the garage of one of these young lads, the band slowly takes place. At first, the "music" that the original three young men play, can be called quite atrocious. It is not until they enlist the help of a previous musical prodigy, Screamin' John McGee, that their music begins to take on better and better qualities, and the band name, The Monarchs. At this point, enter a fourth young man who becomes the band's singer, and a young lady who wants to be a part of the band, but the guys won't let her, because she's a girl. The lives of these six people are followed from their small beginnings to their present lives.

The casting of the characters for *Rock and Roll*, was chosen well. All of the performers could act, sing and play several instruments; providing an incredibly talented ensemble. Each performer brought

some individual quality to their respective characters, and a dimension of small town personality. For example, there's Chink (Milo Shandel), a guy who really seems to epitomize the qualities of male youth in any generation; crass, slightly misogynistic, and an all around partier. Coming from a lower middle-class family, he takes it quite badly when the band breaks up; after all, it's his dream. Manny (Peter Baylis) is the typical spoiled rich kid, who's doing this for kicks. Brought up in a deeply religious family, Manny manages to combine religion with good old fashion self-aggrandizing greed. Granted, he does have some heart, but often his personality clashes with Chink's background. Brent (W. J. Matheson) appears to be the leader of the band, keeping the others in line and doing the band's accounting. He falls in love with Shirly (Monique Lund) who wants to be a part of the band, but she can't seem to get into "The Boy's Club". She's more like the band's central fan, especially of Brent. Later in the band's rise, Parker (Tim Gammon) appears and applies as the band's lead singer. At first, he is ridiculed by the others, but eventually gets the position. For Parker, this is just a step up to his dream of becoming a famous performer. Then there's Screamin' John McGee (Tim Howar), a guy who's motto seems to be live hard, live fast, get as much as you want out of life, then...kaput!

These performers were absolutely great, with the music ranging from



Some of the stars of TNB's *Rock and Roll*: (L to R) Peter Baylis, W.J. Matheson, Monique Lund, Milo Shandel and Tim Gammon.

favourite oldies to original scores. The upcoming Monarch's Reunion concert brings the band together again and each character has, to some extent, achieved his or her dream. Manny now has his own business that is quite successful, while Parker has gone on to become the "Canadian version of Wayne Newton." Brent has become a public accountant and married Shirly, whereas Chink has...well he's pretty much

remained who he is albeit with a small-time job in Mushaboom. As for Screamin' John McGee, well he lived fast, lived life to the fullest and died young. It should be noted that throughout the play, Screamin' John McGee acts as a narrator for many of the play's scenes. The reunion concert sparks memorable chords in each of these people, and for them, it is a joy to once again perform their music.

The lives of these people from the band's meager beginnings to rising stars in Mushaboom, and subsequent breakup, follows the dreams and aspirations that many people have in life. Over this theme of following-your-dreams, are the typical teenage experiences in life, such as first dates, growing responsibilities and the differences among the characters and their families. *Rock and Roll* is a great musical performance that is sure to be a hit.

## The Cinema Bums Go To The Oscars

Andrew: Okay, no movies this week - instead, Taigue and I intend to do Oscar previews. But before we begin, I just want to ask "Who cares about the Oscars?" How many people tune in, and why? To watch rich people accept awards for movies that the audience didn't see? Now *that's* entertainment.

Taigue: Yes, it is once again time for all those nominees to don Armani suits and Calvin Klein dresses in order to really look good when they lose, or win. But the Oscars are not just about getting dressed up in thousand dollar outfits, it's about selling movies to the public and letting everyone know just how commercialised the whole movie industry is.

A: So why do people watch? What is it in the whole ceremony that is so exciting? What makes people happy when their picks win? Oh well. Read on, and hopefully you won't have to tune in for the real thing.

T: Personally, I was disappointed with this years nominations, none of the movies that I would have nominated were chosen which means that this year I care even less than usual. However, there were a few nominations that I completely disagree with, so at least I have something to say about this years picks.

A: And the nominees for Best Picture are: *Apollo 13*, *Babe*, *Braveheart*, *Il Postino*, and *Sense and Sensibility*. Where's *Seven*? *Get Shorty*? And why is *Braveheart* there? I thought it was such a tired,

drawn-out cliched film. But to tell the truth, I haven't even see any of these except for *Apollo 13* and *Braveheart*. But aren't the Academy Awards/Oscars supposed to be an international competition? All I see is *Il Postino*, and the rest is Hollywood, Hollywood, Hollywood. If Hollywood produces the only "quality" films in this world, we are a doomed culture.

T: Exactly. What merits did these films have that made them worth nomination? Well let's look at the facts - *Apollo 13* was a shoe-in because of its historical significance to the U.S., and *Braveheart* was also historical in nature. *Il Postino* and *Sense and Sensibility* are love stories and as Oscars go, there are usually a few of these every year. But why *Babe*, a movie about would be bacon ends? It is not your typical Oscar pick, however, despite my dislike for this nominee, our editor assures me that *Babe* was "a really great movie".

A: Even though I disagree with most of what you're saying, I will just ignore you for the sake of brevity. Back on track - Best Actor: Nicholas Cage (*Leaving Las Vegas*), Richard Dreyfuss (*Mr. Holland's Opus*), Anthony Hopkins (*Nixon*), Sean Penn (*Dead Men Walking*), or Massimo Troisi (*Il Postino*). I didn't see any of these, so I'll shut up now so that we can move on. However, I think Massimo

Troisi will win, in no small part due to sympathy (he died within a few hours of his final scene).

T: Well, maybe he will and maybe he won't, who knows. Sean Penn is definitely in contention, although he hasn't done anything significant since *Carlito's Way*. Personally I would like to see either Penn or Cage win it but it doesn't really matter because I didn't see any of these movies, except for *Nixon*, and I didn't like it enough to give it any praise. What I really would have liked to see was a nomination for Morgan Freeman (*Seven*) because he was fantastic as always.

A: Next up - Best Actress: Susan Sarandon (*Dead Man Walking*), Elisabeth Shue (*Leaving Las Vegas*), Sharon Stone (*Casino*), Meryl Streep (*The Bridges of Madison County*), or Emma Thompson (*Sense and Sensibility*). I only saw *Casino*, and yes, Sharon Stone was good.

T: Okay, now here is a strange coincidence, almost all the nominees have last names that start with the letter 'S', except for Thompson. And that was the most interesting part about the actress nominations. However, what does it mean? Will Emma win because of her alphabetic originality or will she

be shunned as the black sheep?

A: Hmm. Deep thoughts. I don't even want to bother with Supporting Actor, except that I think Kevin Spacey should have been put into a different category.

T: Well once again I disagree with the nominations, Brad Pitt (*Twelve Monkeys*), James Cromwell (*Babe*), Ed Harris (*Apollo 13*), Tim Roth (*Rob Roy*), and Kevin Spacey (*The Usual Suspects*). Well, Kevin Spacey and Brad Pitt may have deserved recognition but both were for the wrong movies, each of these actors were fabulous in *Seven* and were only upstaged by Morgan Freeman.

A: I don't want to bother with Supporting Actress either. I either didn't see any of the movies (except *Apollo 13*), and I hardly recognize any of the names, except for Mira Sorvino (*Mighty Aphrodite*). Let's just skip to Director: Chris Noonan (*Babe*), Mel Gibson (*Braveheart*), Tim Robbins (*Dead Man Walking*), Mike Figgis (*Leaving Las Vegas*), and Michael Radford (*Il Postino*). I do not want Mel Gibson to win for his overly melodramatic (and lengthy) epic. After that, it's a toss-up.

T: So basically we were completely disinterested with the whole Oscar thing, and if Andrew and I had our way, *Seven* would win everything from best picture to best director, but it didn't even get an honorable mention. So with lack of anything better to choose from, I think *Babe* will sweep the Oscars.

