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Chicago
 By: Dan Marek

With the big screen release of the revamped award-winning Broadway play **Chicago** comes a rousing, robust and masterful musical sure to satisfy moviegoers and theater fans alike. With the recent success of the **Moulin Rouge** score and soundtrack, the tone has been set for the new millennium musical with over-the-top compositions and quick, flashy numbers that try to blow your mind with each new act.

Where many musicals have used narration as a crutch, the emphasis of **Chicago** lies within its storytelling score, written by John Kander and Fred Ebb, to tell the tale. "Overture/ All That Jazz," which launches the film, combines two original numbers into an energetic 1920s stomp fueled by booze and thick clouds of cigarette smoke until star Catherine Zeta-Jones lets out high-pitched, bloodcurdling notes that are effectively backed by a chorus.

The introduction of Queen Latifah's character Mama screams out rivalry and backroom betrayal with the classic "When You're Good to Mama." Latifah's performance is highlighted by the last note, in which the rap artist hits the 'long and high' show-closer perfectly. And what good would a prison be with out a little "Cell Block Tango?" In the film, the infamous burlesque window-style cells outline the vixens along the row as the characters trade off war stories of cheating men and bubble-popping murder. The song inspired Latifah, Lil' Kim and Macy Gray to redo the track -- and expand the title to "Cell Block Tango (He Had it Comin')" -- in a not-so "Lady Marmalade" hip-hop track that bounces around Gray's smooth vocals while Kim and the Queen knock out the man-hater verses.

Surprisingly, on "All I Care About" and the



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Track Listing

1. Overture/And All That Jazz - Catherine Zeta-Jones/Renee Zellweger
2. Funny Honey - Renee Zellweger/John C. Reilly/Colm Feore
3. When You're Good to Mama - Queen Latifah/Taye Diggs
4. Cell Block Tango - Catherine Zeta-Jones/Susan Misner/Deidre Goodwin
5. All I Care About - Richard Gere/Renee Zellweger
6. We Both Reached For the Gun - Christine Baranski/Cleve Asbury/Shawn Amyot
7. Roxie - Renee Zellweger
8. I Can't Do It Alone - Catherine Zeta-Jones/Taye Diggs
9. Mista Cellophane - John C. Reilly
10. Razzle Dazzle - Richard Gere
11. Class - Catherine Zeta-Jones/Queen Latifah
12. Nowadays (Roxie) - Renee Zellweger/Taye Diggs
13. Nowadays (Hot Honey Rag Medley) - Renee Zellweger/Catherine Zeta-Jones/Taye Diggs
14. I Move On - Catherine Zeta-Jones/Renee Zellweger
15. After Midnight - Danny Elfman
16. Roxie's Suite - Danny Elfman
17. Cell Block Tango (He Had It Comin') - Queen Latifah/Lil' Kim/Macy Gray
18. Love Is a Crime - Anastcia

Monday, February

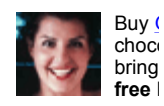
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ragtime-tinged "We Both Reached for the Gun" co-star Richard Gere pulls off good performances on every cylinder. While his sense of pacing on "Reached for the Gun" sets the mood of lawyer Billy Flynn, "Razzle Dazzle" falls short of the 1975 and 1999 cast performances that nailed the song so well.

Renée Zellweger shines on her character's opus, "Roxie," with rich vocals that seem to outshine many of Zeta-Jones's pieces by wisping around the song with an airy, flirtatious quality. While the duet between Zeta-Jones and Zellweger on "Nowadays/ Hot Honey Rag" shows their voices blend together well harmonically, the piano-heavy rag that ends the song really gets your toes tapping.

Two songs by super-composer Danny Elfman, "After Midnight" and "Roxie's Suite," round out the sound of the score. Where "After Midnight" captures the tight, but downtrodden feeling of a club after the show, "Roxie's Suite" grabs the best of the characters' show to uplift your whiskey-torn heart and get your feet on the floor once again.

Although many purists will argue that the original 1975 score can't beat the dazzling performances by Gwen Verdon (for whom Velma's role was written), Jerry Orbach and Chita Rivera, this soundtrack adds just enough to make it a must-have for Broadway fans while introducing the songs to new audiences that may not have seen the live show.

More than a soundtrack, **Chicago** gives moviegoers a reproduction of the film in the aural sense -- a souvenir that rekindles the performance in the hearts of fans long after the credits roll.

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