



STAGE TO SCREEN:

Considerable differences are found in the film version, including Catherine Zeta-Jones' character all together.

Get your hairspray ready: 1987 is right around the corner.

Hollywood 1987: The times were tough, the hair was big and the music was rockin'. The heart of rock and roll could be found right inside LA's The Bourbon Club, owned by Dennis Dupree (Alec Baldwin) and his right hand man, Lonny (Russell Brand). Having showcased thousands of acts over the years, they have just landed their biggest gig: The final performance of Arsenal before their leading man Stacee Jaxx (Tom Cruise) goes solo. With a faithful and talented staff, including the rocker Drew (newcomer Diego Boneta) and the out of town singer, Sherrie (Julianne Hough), Dennis hopes to put The Bourbon Club back on the map and get out of debt. However, not everyone is working for the weekend. Newly appointed Mayor Whitmore (Bryan Cranston) has announced his distaste for the lowlife activity on the strip and claims he won't rest until rock is off the streets. However, his wife, Patricia (Catherine Zeta-Jones), is the brains of the operation, with a secret motive for the destruction of The Bourbon Club and everything it stands for. Everything seems hopeful for our rockers until Stacee Jaxx performs. All of a sudden, everything changes and no one is the same.

Did I mention Rock of Ages is a musical? Throughout every scenario each character gets themselves in, a familiar 80's ballad will flood the theater with a little-too-obvious meaning in lyrics. You see, when Stacee Jaxx is asked by a reporter who Stacee Jaxx really is, he breaks out with Wanted Dead Or Alive by Bon Jovi, stating that "Sometimes you tell the day by the bottle you drink". At first, it seems pretty exhausting to imagine how much work went into finding each character a line that actually matched their story. Then, around the 3rd song, we start realizing that every line is almost literal to a tee. When Stacee hops on top of a keg being carted by a roadie, he'll exclaim "On a steel horse I ride" from the same Bon Jovi song. After a while, it begins to feel like you're being beaten over the head by literal dialogue.

The music, however, constantly keeps things interesting. Rock of Ages features 80's music ranging anywhere from Journey and Scorpion to REO Speedwagon and Poison. Each character has their own moment to shine with their own song, but it's Drew and Sherrie who get the royal treatment. It becomes apparent that almost every actor is lip-synching their lyrics, which becomes annoying pretty quickly. If there was one person to steal the show, the winner would absolutely be Tom Cruise. Cruise understands it's his show and runs with it. Diego Boneta does a great job as Drew and even Hough gave a surprising performance as Sherrie, the teenage runaway with a killer voice. But Cruise knows all eyes are on him and gives another incredible performance. Say what you will about his behavior outside of the screen, but on screen, he's a professional and continuously proves he's an A-list actor.

Rock of Ages has the unfortunate nature of coming from a Broadway musical that lasts near 3 hours in runtime. In order to include enough of the same story and songs, Director Adam Shankman allows a 2 hour runtime for his cast and crew. And this is, unfortunately, what weakens Rock of Ages enough to make its' flaws stand out. At an hour and a half, the film would shine brighter. The actors do everything they can to save the show, but nothing seems to outweigh the drawn out nature of the story.

Rock of Ages has one selling factor, besides Tom Cruises' performance, that makes the long-lasting, weak story enjoyable: The humor. With comedians like Alec Baldwin, Russell Brand and a baboon decked out in a dictator costume, it's hard not to find something for everyone's sense of humor; be it in song lyrics or just dialogue. Even Cruise gets to lay his comedy cards in every once in a while.

Suffering from a weak story that drags itself on for far too long, Rock of Ages distracts its' audience with great humor, a good soundtrack, and surprisingly well done performances long enough to keep people smiling. All in all, it's nothin' but a good time.



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