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School of Awesome

I'll be the first to admit that I had pretty low expectations for *School of Rock*. While I enjoyed the film as a child, I had categorized it as a low-quality movie starring an over-the-top B-list celebrity who likes to flail around all the time. But I'll also be the first to admit that I'm an idiot. I thought the performance was phenomenal, from start to finish. From the casting to the acting, singing, and music playing, I was blown out of the water. It was a huge, very obviously expensive production designed to wow audiences with its exaggerated performances and it absolutely succeeded. While it may not have been the most quality show I've seen with amazing actors, it was a fun, entertaining experience and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

This show stuck almost verbatim to the script of the film. I wasn't sure what to expect in regard to the adaptation, but I was genuinely satisfied with it. They kept the classic line of, "You're tacky and I hate you," and Summer's horrible rendition of "Memories" which gave the film its character. But, while some may complain that the stage adaptation lacks originality, I truly think that leaving this production so similar to the film was the right decision. I would have been disappointed if the music from the film had changed or the plot of the story had been altered. I did appreciate the small ways that they modernized the show, though. By adding

modern artists as the students' favorites, such as Taylor Swift, and by adding more technology such as iPhones and MacBook laptops, it kept it relevant.

The casting was superb. All of the main actors looked like the ones from the film, especially Alex Brightman, who played Dewey. Even the actors who played Freddy, Summer, and Billy looked very similar to those in the original film. I appreciated the effort the casting director went through to stay true to the film's original actors. Brightman mastered the mannerisms of Jack Black and certainly did his character justice, perfectly mimicking his vocal inflections and ADHD energy levels. I kept thinking about how exhausted he must be after each show because he is almost literally never standing still. If he didn't take personal lessons from Black, he certainly studied his work well. There were even moments I forgot that he wasn't Jack Black.

The musical talent of the children involved was incredible. The little boy who played the guitar for the band was on fire. When Dewey said, "This kid is the next Jimi Hendrix," he certainly wasn't lying. His guitar solo where he just shreds on the guitar was so impressive. If Andrew Lloyd Weber hadn't made the announcement at the beginning of the show saying that the children do play their own instruments, I wouldn't have thought it was real. Their singing was spectacular and I even thought their acting was really good too, contrary to what some of my classmates seemed to think. I think when it comes to child actors, there is a certain level of empathy and a certain ability to really place oneself in one's shoes that children are incapable of simply because that aspect of their brain hasn't quite developed yet. So considering the fact that these children memorized their lines and music and performed them

with the appropriate emotion in their voice, they did a stellar job. With age and experience, the fine-tuning of the acting will come as well.

On a more technical aspect, I really appreciated all that went into the staging and the lighting. I loved the sets that they created. They were very elaborate but everything so smoothly transitioned on and off the stage. The film has a huge number of scenes, so it was a very good adaptation to the stage. I liked especially how they utilized the rotating stage for the live performances. It was really cool to watch it rotate and see the "backstage" for those important scenes. The lighting was also incredibly well done. It highlighted Dewey the entire time, but also the important students as well. In the beginning school scene, each child that spoke had a spotlight during his or her first line. But when the students were performing as a band, the lighting very well resembled a rock concert. Although I will say that I didn't appreciate when the lights shined blindingly in the audience members' faces. But that sometimes happens in real rock concerts, so I suppose it was staying accurate to the experiences.

I definitely believe that this was the best show with which to end our semester. It was well acted, well performed, and well designed. Alex Brightman shined on the stage and I was constantly in awe of how well he kept up with the incredibly taxing physical demands of the role. And he never seemed out of breath. The only giveaway was how sweaty he was, soaking through his shirts. The adaptation from the film was stellar and the children were talented. It was clear that everyone involved in the performance was having a blast, audience

included. *School of Rock* impressed me and I would absolutely see it again and recommend it to others. In fact, I already have recommended it to some friends.