



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Rent

After seeing *Rent* soon after it opened on Broadway, director Chris Columbus (*Home Alone*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*) was so inspired, he immediately corralled his 1492 Pictures partners Michael Barnathan and Mark Radcliffe into seeing the musical as well. They reacted with similar enthusiasm.

It wasn't only Jonathan Larson's wonderful music and lyrics that captured their attention, but the powerful and honest way in which it dealt with crucial contemporary life issues. Says Radcliffe: 'The show tackled two significant life questions we all share: First, "What am I going to do with my life" and secondly, "Who am I going to spend it with?"'

In addition, Radcliffe continues, 'You add the complication of having a limited time to live. How will you deal with that as well?'

The moment Columbus, Radcliffe and Barnathan left the theatre, all they could talk about was 'how great it would be to do a movie with the kind of energy, power and emotional immediacy of the show we had just seen on stage,' recalls producer Barnathan.

'To me *Rent* was about dealing with emotion, about confronting the feeling of falling in love for the first time,' says Columbus, 'and regardless of some of its darker aspects, it was ultimately about hope, about understanding that each day is important and you need to live each day to its fullest.'

Bringing *Rent* to the screen became the filmmakers' passion and, for several years, they tried to obtain the rights to the project, which had been optioned by Jane Rosenthal and Robert De Niro, who run Tribeca Productions. Finally, in 2004, they were able to partner with Tribeca and secure financing for the project.

'I was on the phone with Chris giving him the news that our funding had fallen through,' says Barnathan. '(Revolution Studios' founder) Joe Roth overheard my conversation, turned around and said, "If you're talking about *Rent*, I'll finance the movie." We had a deal within a week.'

When Rosenthal learned that Revolution Studios had agreed to provide the funding for *Rent*, she was overjoyed. 'Bob (De Niro) and I had spent almost a decade trying to bring this project to the screen,' says Rosenthal. 'We were thrilled to hear that Chris and 1492 were able to secure the financing and finally make this labour of love a reality.'

Though, according to Columbus, it may not be apparent from his previous films, he has a close affinity to the story of *Rent*. 'I lived in New York for 17 years in the 1980s when *Rent* takes place. I lived in a loft and had a lot of those experiences. We were dirt poor and we lived in a loft on 26th Street in Manhattan for three years,' he says. 'I could relate to exactly what the characters of Mark (Anthony Rapp) and Roger (Adam Pascal) were going through. I knew those people. So for me, it was an opportunity to go back to a very important time in my life and to bring my own experiences to that part of it. I was concerned about someone else doing it who didn't have that experience and hadn't lived in that world. For me it was extremely important

not to homogenise any of the elements of the play. I wanted the film to be, in a sense, even grittier because film enables you to be a lot more realistic.'

Having secured Revolution Studios and Tribeca as partners, Columbus next met with members of Jonathan Larson's family, his sister Julie and father Al Larson. There was an immediate connection, and after several years of false starts and stops, the Larson's felt comfortable and excited to entrust *Rent* to Columbus.

'For seven or eight years, we felt a huge burden of having (a) decided to allow a movie to be made and (b) what was that going to be?' recalls co-producer Julie Larson. 'We really didn't know. We just knew it was taking a chance on something that was going to be different. We were terrified that we would let the fans down or let my brother down, so there was a huge burden.'

'I think it sort of took the time that it needed – all these false starts – so that it could get to Chris,' continues Larson, 'I was still very nervous about the idea of making a movie. But once we met Chris, we felt so comfortable – he got it.'

The bond continued throughout the film's production with Larson's father, Al, a constant and comforting presence. 'Having Al on the set every day was a remarkable thing. He was like my own personal connection to Jonathan Larson,' says Columbus. 'I never knew Jonathan. I'd read about him, seen documentary footage and talked to some of his friends, but having Al there was an emotional connection for me, another level of inspiration. He was the unofficial set papa. He was always there for any of us.'

The majority of the film's exteriors were shot in New York. Production designer Howard Cummings began his work by taking pictures of entire Manhattan neighbourhoods to find just the right look for each scene. 'I went to the places that I knew hadn't changed much over the years,' he recalls.

Shooting on actual city streets was an entirely new and different experience for the show's returning cast members. 'The most surreal experience for me in terms of taking it from stage to film,' says Anthony Rapp, 'was when I got to sing a big section of "What You Own" while actually walking down Seventh Street in the East Village. There I was between Avenues A and B, at night, in the cold, with Tompkins Square Park on my left and this row of houses on my right. I was walking down the middle of the street singing with the music blaring in my ears and I thought, "This is amazing."'

Additional external locations in New York included other areas of the East Village, East Side Community High School, the Flatiron District in midtown Manhattan, the Williamsburg Bridge and a subway station in Brooklyn.

Cummings required locations and sets that worked on several levels.

'The reason *Rent* works so well is because it goes from being really intimate to being large and exuberant and kind of wild and crazy.'

Production notes

RENT

Directed by: Chris Columbus
©: Revolution Studios Distribution Company LLC
Production Company: Tribeca Productions
Presented by: Revolution Studios, Columbia Pictures Corporation
In association with: 1492 Productions
Executive Producers: Jeffrey Seller, Kevin McCollum, Allan S. Gordon, Lata Ryan
Co-executive Producer: Tom Sherak
Produced by: Jane Rosenthal, Robert De Niro, Chris Columbus, Mark Radcliffe, Michael Barnathan
Co-producer: Julie Larson
Associate Producers: Paula Dupré Pesmen, Geoff Hansen
Unit Production Manager: Pamela Thur-Weir
Production Manager: L. Dean Jones Jr
Production Accountant: Stevie Jean Lazo
Location Manager: Jonathan Shedd
Location Manager (NY Unit): Patty Carey-Perazzo
Location Manager (LA Unit): Gerard Averill
1st Assistant Director: Geoff Hansen
2nd Assistant Director: Sunday Stevens
Script Supervisor: Carol DePasquale
Script Supervisor (NY Unit): Thomas Johnston
Casting by: Bernard Telsey
Screenplay by: Stephen Chbosky
Based on the musical by: Jonathan Larson
Book, Music and Lyrics by: Jonathan Larson
Director of Photography: Stephen Goldblatt
Camera Operator: Ray De La Motte
B Camera/Steadicam Operator: William Arnot
16mm Cameraman: Michael Anderson
Visual Effects Supervisor: Scott Farrar
Visual Effects Producer: Stephanie Hornish
Special Visual Effects: Industrial Light & Magic
Special Effects Supervisor: John McLeod
Edited by: Richard Pearson
Additional Editor: Sean Thompson
Production Designer: Howard Cummings
Art Director: Nanci Noblett Starr
Set Designers: Jann Engel, Harry E. Otto, Craig Edelblut, Caroline Quinn Decker, Paul Measom
Set Decorator: Barbara Munch
Costume Designer: Aggie Guerard Rodgers
Costume Supervisors: Elaine Ramires, Judy Feil
Department Head Make-up: Mindy Hall
Key Make-up: Debra Coleman
Department Head Hair: Yvette Rivas
Key Hair: Chris Clark
Main Titles Designed by: Shine
Score Written by: Jamie Muhoberac, Tim Pierce, Rob Cavallo, Doug McKean
RENT Band: Paul Bushnell (*bass*); Dorian Crozier (*drums/percussions/programming*); Jamie Muhoberac (*keyboards/piano/organ*); Tim Pierce, Greg Suran (*electric/acoustic guitars*)
Vocal Conductor: Tim Weil
Strings/Horns Conducted/Arranged by: David Richard Campbell
Songs/Music Arranged by: Rob Cavallo
Music Supervisor: Matt Sullivan
Choreography: Keith Young
Production Sound Mixer: Nelson Stoll
Supervising Sound Mixers: Michael Minkler, Lora Hirschberg
Supervising Sound Editor: Richard Hymns
Stunt Co-ordinator: Rocky Capella

Cast

Rosario Dawson (*Mimi Marquez*)
Taye Diggs (*Benjamin Coffin III*)
Wilson Jermaine Heredia (*Angel Dumott Schunard*)
Jesse L. Martin (*Tom Collins*)
Idina Menzel (*Maureen Johnson*)
Adam Pascal (*Roger Davis*)
Anthony Rapp (*Mark Cohen*)
Tracie Thoms (*Joanne Jefferson*)
Aaron Lohr (*Steve*)
Sarah Silverman (*Alexi Darling*)
Wayne Wilcox (*Gordon*)
Anna Deavere Smith (*Mrs Jefferson*)
Daryl Edwards (*Mr Jefferson*)
Daniel London (*Paul*)
Aisha de Haas (*blanket woman*)
Julia Roth, Porscha Radcliffe (*rent tenants*)
Stephen Payne (*homeless Squeegee man*)
Darryl Chan, Ken Clark, R.C. Ormond (*thugs*)
David Fine (*homeless man on Range Rover*)
MacKenzie Firgens (*April*)
Eleanor Columbus (*April's friend*)
Matthew McCollum (*guy at bar*)
Jason Foster (*the man*)
Brendan Columbus, Austin Shea (*punks in park*)
Bianca Sams (*Ali*)
Heather Barberie (*Pam*)
Liisa Cohen (*Sue*)
Sharon Ferrol-Young, Liz Ramos, Kristin Medwick, Katie Weber, Angela McConnell, Jamielyn Duggin, Felecia Stevenson, Kim Williams (*Cat Scratch floor dancers*)
Damia Foti, Laura Padierna (*Cat Scratch waitress*)
Kevin Hagan, Brian Delate (*cops*)
Michael Rosales, Niyuk Hairrell, Larissa Kiernan (*subway punks*)
Marco de la Cruz, Ericka Harden, Truc Luong (*subway passengers*)
Megan Biolchini (*subway grad student*)
Nick Scoggin (*subway man*)
John Champion, Titus West (*subway stockbrokers*)
Renda Pettis (*slightly older subway woman*)
Alison De Oliveira (*subway businesswoman*)
Debbie de Coudreaux (*subway mom*)
Chris Chalk (*street vendor who sells coats*)
Cory Duval, Clarke Devereux (*riot cops*)
Coren Rosey (*Life Cafe manager*)
Shaun Earl (*Life Cafe waiter*)
Matthew Dickens, Tara Nicole Hughes, Troy Christian, Gigi Hunter, Kevin Stea, Robert Prescott Lee, Sebastien Poffet, Linda Cevallos, Roosevelt Flenoury (*bohemians*)
Mike Garibaldi (*Mr Grey*)
Rod Arrants (*Mr Hansen*)
Jennifer Siebel (*receptionist*)
Kevin Blackton (*Mr Johnson*)
Bettina Devin (*Mrs Johnson*)
Corinne Blum (*female bartender at engagement party*)
Annie Barnathan (*candy striper*)
David Stewart, Marcos Estebez, Emily Rahe (*mourners*)
Vivis Colombetti (*Angel's grandmother*)
Nicole Cherie Flores (*Angel's sister*)
James Anthony Cotton (*used car salesman*)
Jim Cranna (*pawn shop dealer*)
Randy Graff (*Mrs Cohen*)
Joel Swetow (*Mr Cohen*)

USA 2005©
135 mins

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