

Playlist complements teen love story

BY STEPHANIE HALL
Reviewer

The soundtrack struck out, but "Nick and Nora's Infinite Playlist" proved to be the romantic comedy of the season.

The movie stars Michael Cera as Nick, the movie's indie-nerd protagonist, whose heart was broken after an "intense" six-month relationship with two-timing golden girl Tris (Alex Dziena). This changes when he meets his own indie equivalent in the form of Nora (Kat Dennings). In a desperate need for a fake boyfriend Nora chooses Nick, ex-boyfriend of her friend Tris, in a horrible, only-in-a-movie twist. Accompanied by Nick's gay band mates and Nora's drunken friend, the characters make their way through New York City in search of their favorite band's secret concert. After a run-in with their exes, both Nick and Nora debate between old love and a new beginning.

Cera plays the same nerdy sweet boy he's played before. He takes the sweet gentleman from "Juno" and combines him with the funny nerd from "Superbad" to create a uniquely nerdy indie gentleman boyfriend. His romantic opposite, Dennings, who appeared most recently in "House Bunny" and "Charlie Bartlett," plays a similar character from "Charlie Bartlett" as the misunderstood daughter of a prominent dad. Although the roles do not push any boundaries for the actors, both are perfectly suited.

Other memorable and slightly more interesting characters are Nick's band mates, played by Aaron Yoo ("21") and Rafi Gavaron ("Breaking and Entering"). They hover around Nick like matchmaking fairy godparents trying to help him find a suitable alternative to his devil ex, Tris. The duo

even lends Nora a lacy bra to replace her sports bra uni-boob in hopes of distracting Nick from his heartbreak.

The movie contrasts greatly from the typical stoner or drinking movies that seem to be produced in droves — like "College" and "Pineapple Express." Instead, the two main characters are more straight-edged. The movie shies away from "Juno"'s snarky-one liners and goes straight for the sweet and sticky PG-13 romance, showing a more sensitive rather than sarcastic side of independent movies. The PG-13 parts come in with the underage drinking and sexual relations of sorts between characters, which make the movie more realistic for a night in downtown New York. However, through the protagonists the movie showed that a group of people

can have a great time in the city without falling over drunk or hooking up with random strangers.

Although Nick and Nora's playlist might be infinite, it was not at all memorable. With an all-star cast of indie sounds from the likes of Vampire Weekend, We Are Scientists and the Shout Out Louds, the movie seems to have the playlist made. But honestly, even though much of the movie was centered around music, I can't remember a single song from it. The music goes along with the movie and fits the scenes, but the songs should have played a bigger part. The movie did try to boost its street credibility with its alternative audiences by including cameo appearances by indie artists Bishop Allen and Devendra Banhart.

Although there were no love ballads in the soundtrack, this is a perfect date movie for any sweet guy looking to impress a girl. This indie, city-wise version of "The Notebook" will impress girls who prefer a good mix CD to roses.

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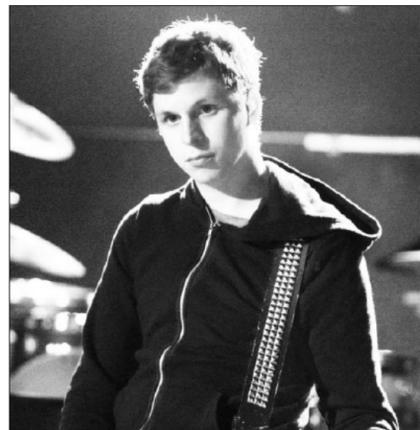


Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures
Michael Cera, Ari Graynor and Kat Dennings star in "Nick and Nora's Infinite Playlist," which was released Oct. 3. The movie had earned more than \$11 million dollars Monday and is ranked fifth in box office earnings.

Murs loses voice, Clash releases classic show

BY HARRY BURSON
Reviewer

Murs — "Murs for President" [Warner Brothers 2008]

As underground rapper Murs makes the transition to a major label with his first release for Warner Brothers, he goes to great lengths to let you know that he is still an independent dude — meaning he predictably bemoans the state of modern hip-hop.

After the obligatory intro (Murs announcing his candidacy) the album gets started with "I'm Innocent." Over a sped-up soul sample, Murs explains that his social consciousness makes his music better than the majority of the rap in the game.

Sound kind of familiar? Murs follows just about every convention that has steered alternative rap for the last 20 years — some verses against excessive materialism, misogyny, drugs and violence, some rhymes for political awareness, cultural renewal and unity. They are worthy ideas but are delivered in a clumsily heavy-handed way.

In the lead single "Can It Be (Half a Million Dollars and 18 Months Later)" Murs takes a swipe at Nas, saying that while the veteran MC was saying hip-hop is dead, Murs was creating something new. Here's the thing: There is very little substance to this album beyond repeated attacks on the rap game. Maybe Murs has a better message than Lil' Wayne, but I assure you that "Tha Carter III" is much more entertaining.

Hip-hop has been funny, thoughtful and, most importantly, popular in the past — remember "The College Dropout"? Weak cameos from will.i.am and Snoop Dogg will not make "Murs for President" a crossover success, just another mediocre rap album that Murs so detests.

Like other failed presidential candidates, Murs spends too much time attacking the competition and never finds his own voice.

Antony and the Johnsons — "Another World" EP [Secretly Canadian 2008]

Since the release of "I Am a Bird Now" in 2005, Antony and the Johnsons have made con-



Photo courtesy of The Clash Online

siderable headway into the mainstream with singer Antony Hegarty appearing onstage and recording with Leonard Cohen and Lou Reed after winning Britain's prestigious Mercury Prize.

Not bad for a group that specializes in sexually ambiguous cabaret chamber pop fronted by a singer whose instantly recognizable, divisive voice sounds like Velvet Underground chanteuse Nico choking back tears.

In preparation for their forthcoming full album,

the group has released a teaser EP to tide over fans still salivating over Hegarty's recent vocal work with Hercules and the Love Affair.

Hegarty's voice is the group's key asset. A fragile, emotive instrument accompanied by muted piano and light, ethereal orchestration is showcased beautifully on the disc's best track, the opener "Another World," in which Hegarty lists the things he'll miss when he dies. It's like the scene from "Our Town," only

sappier and therefore sadder.

The rest of the EP continues with the subdued feel except for the misguided rave-up of "Shake the Devil," in which Hegarty attempts some lame Tom Waits-like kitchen sink blues stuff.

It's an excellent teaser for the forthcoming album and not a bad starting point for the uninitiated.

The Clash — "Live at Shea Stadium" [Epic/Legacy 2008]

In 1982, the Clash famously opened for the Who during a North American tour. Conventional wisdom says that the Clash suffered opening for one of Britain's biggest bands in stadiums and arenas across the U.S. Punks didn't necessarily see the connection between the Who's garage rock of the '60s and the studied primitivism of their own movement. Who fans supposedly didn't understand all this newfangled racket.

Recently some tapes of the second night of the Clash opening for the Who at Shea Stadium were found among Clash lead singer Joe Strummer's possessions. For most critics, considering the venue and the audience, the album would be a victory for the Clash as long as they don't play too terribly — and they don't.

When the Beatles played Shea Stadium in 1965 a rock 'n' roll concert of such magnitude had been virtually unthinkable. Playing in a stadium is much different than playing in a club — it is impossible to develop a real rapport with an audience of tens of thousands, and for a band as high energy as the Clash, coming up in English clubs, this is a serious liability.

The show is not awful. There are strong songs, notably "London Calling," "Should I Stay or Should I Go" and "I Fought the Law." There are also terrible missteps like "Rock the Casbah" — a limp, almost unrecognizable rendition of a great song.

As a historical document "Live at Shea Stadium" will interest devoted Clash devotees, but for most it hardly justifies its own existence.

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