

## **Stealing the Show**

By: Emma Robertson

In Damien Chazelle's hit movie musical "La La Land," heartthrob Ryan Gosling and charmer Emma Stone come together to artfully portray two struggling performers living in the fast-paced world of Los Angeles.

Mia (Stone) is an aspiring actress who has been juggling auditions and her part-time job as a barista at a coffee shop on the Warner Bros. lot. Sebastian (Gosling) is a jazz musician who aspires to open his own jazz club in order to revive the music genre. The two are swept up into a whirlwind romance but must eventually choose between their relationship and their flourishing careers.

The musical opens with a dramatic dance number; people who are stuck in standstill traffic pour out of their cars and flood the streets, jumping, dancing and singing. The following few songs are also accompanied by strong choreography, all at the hands of choreographer Mandy Moore. However, as the movie progresses, the music transitions to softer pieces that use the lyrics to propel the plot. Composer Justin Hurwitz works in simple, yet hauntingly beautiful melodies that will get stuck in your head for days.

A standout feature of "La La Land" is the acting. Gosling and Stone play their characters with such a naturalness that you may feel almost intrusive at times. In particular, during a scene in which Mia and Sebastian are arguing, it feels as if you are sitting in on a conversation you

shouldn't be because the argument is so realistic and intimate. The actors feel like real people, not like movie characters. They struggle like most young adults trying to begin a career, which makes them relatable.

The acting, however, is not the only aspect of "La La Land" that exudes naturalness. Gosling and Stone bring an unrefined sound to the musical numbers. You never question if Gosling and Stone are *actually* singing; their voices are left essentially untouched with very little voice correction. There are even moments when their voices crack, but it adds to the legitimacy of their characters.

It seems as if Chazelle was really aiming to keep his plot realistic as well. In a movie that could easily have a storybook ending, Chazelle instead opts for an ending that will leave you disappointed, but unsurprised. In the final dance number, Mia and Sebastian float through the rest of their lives as if in a dream, but Chazelle snaps you back to reality to remind you that life is not always a dream.

Although "La La Land" is a beautiful musical in many ways, the cinematography was a work of art in and of itself. Between the lighting, the colors and the cinematography, "La La Land" felt very nostalgic and retro. In some scenes, the subjects were lit by the vibrant colors of a sunset and in others, by artificial lighting to create a more staged look. In some solo musical numbers, the lights would dim and a spotlight would rise in order to achieve a more personal atmosphere. The scenes were often long continuous shots and the camera moved with the subjects, rotating around them or sliding from one subject to another, rather than switching between shots. Not

only does this technique display the genuine talent of the performers, but it also makes you feel as if you're there watching the performances in person.

“La La Land” has danced its way into the hearts of many, including Hollywood itself. It swept up a huge seven awards at this year’s Golden Globes, winning every award it was nominated for. In 128 minutes, Chazelle captured young adulthood, romance, a dying music genre and the competitive nature of life in Hollywood. While most movies and musicals today have that “happily ever after” ending, it was refreshing to see a realistic ending. Yes, “La La Land” may leave you slightly disappointed. However, with the nostalgic feel, the heart wrenching love story, and the artistic filming, in my book, it still gets four and a half stars. I can guarantee, “La La Land” is a movie you’ll want to see again and again.