

# Rock of Ages (2012)

Rated R. Our ratings: V -;2 L -5; S/N -.7 Running time: 1 hour 46 min.

*Do not be conformed to this world,\* but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.  
Romans 12:2*

It wasn't August Toplady's Sherrie and Drew both aspire beloved hymn that director Adam to rock stardom.

Shankman had in mind when he.

Not hymns, but such rock <sup>2012 New Line Cinema</sup>

classics as "I Want to Know What Love Is," "Hit Me with Your Best Shot," "Any Way You Want It," "Living in Paradise," "I Love Rock 'N Roll" is what he celebrates in this cliché-ridden but enjoyable musical. There are those who prefer Toplady's hymn, but we'll get to them a little later.

The plot is an old one, small town girl Sherrie (Julianne Hough) from Kansas with big dreams gets off the bus in L.A. in 1987, has her suitcase stolen, wanders the streets till she comes to her dream destination, The Bourbon Room on the Strip run by Dennis Dupree (Alec Baldwin) and Lonny (Russell Brandt). meets bartender Drew (Diego Boneta) who shares her dream of becoming a rock singer, and he convinces his boss to hire her as a waitress.

We know that they will fall in love, get their big break, suffer a falling out over a misunderstanding, and... Also the

old theme of selling out in order to become successful will rear its ugly head.

Besides the excellent rendition of the music, there is an over the top performance by Tom Cruise as Stacee Jaxx, a veteran rock star who, despite his brain being half fried by drugs, booze, and sex, is still a headliner. His flirting with Sherrie and his dalliance with journalist Constance (Malin Akerman) includes an erotically funny rendition of "I Want to Know What Love Is" that you probably will ever after recall when hearing this old chestnut.

As mentioned, there is one character who would prefer the hymn, Patricia Whitmore (Catherine Zeta-Jones), the crusading wife of the Mayor (Bryan Cranston). A conservative Christian, her goal is to clean up the Strip by closing down The Bourbon Room and driving out all of "the perverts" who throng there. Both she and her husband harbor secrets, his very much in the present, and hers harking back to the days of her youth.

Despite the predictability, this is a funny, tuneful film that most can enjoy. The depiction of Christianity follows the usual movie cliché, so Christian viewers will wince during the dance sequence led by Patricia and her church ladies inside a church sanctuary. Still, it is funny, and the uplifting mood is so buoyed by the music, that most can enjoy the film. It deserves its PG-13 rating (some might argue an R would have been better), so youth leaders should be sure to alert parents if planning for a group to see the film.

## **For Reflection/Discussion**

1. Were you able to predict most of the plot developments in this film? How does it compare to other musicals that you have seen? Adam Shankman also directed *Hairspray*: how does this film compare to his new one?

2. From what we see in the film, what are the dangers to a rock musicians' moral character?
3. Other than those usually cited—drugs and sex—how is the temptation to “sell out” more dangerous for Sherrie and Drew? (Remember when Bob Dylan first used on stage an electric guitar? What did the folkies accuse him of? In his case were they right?)
4. How can the song “I Want to Know What Love Is” be used to explore the various meanings of the much-abused word “love” ? How might this be more difficult now after seeing Tom Cruise's delightfully funny performance of it? Or, can this be used to show how the overly erotic concept of it has become so embedded in pop culture?
5. How does the film follow the usual stereotype in its depiction of Christianity? How is this partially true, and yet also distorting?
6. What was Patricia Whitmore's secret dating back to her youth? How has this made her a conflicted person? Do you think this is often the case with someone who is so fanatically opposed to something? (Such as in some cases a homophobic person turning out to be gay?)
7. What do you thin of the ending? Simplistic but satisfying?