

A splendid review of A-State theatre's "Emma"

AMELIA YOUNG

STAFF WRITER

The Arkansas State Theater Department opened the theater season with a hilariously witty retelling of Jane Austen's "Emma."

Set in the fictional town of Highbury, England, the play follows matchmaker Emma Woodhouse as she tries to find suitable partners for her friends, specifically Harriet Smith, but ends up unintentionally making a match for herself.

Set in the early 1900s, audiences might be surprised to learn that there is plenty to laugh at throughout the entire show. From various innuendos to Mr. Woodhouse's

obsession with gruel to Miss Bates constantly yelling what is going on into her mother's ear.

One of the funniest recurring bits happens between Mr. Elton and his wife. Emma first tries to set Harriet up with Elton, but he is in love with Emma. Once Emma turns him down, he goes and finds himself a new wife. You can hear their giggling before they enter the stage. Elton passionately recites a bit of poetry, and then the two begin to make out. But not in the way you're thinking.

Donovan Walters, who plays Mr. Elton, and Libby Wills, who plays Mrs. Elton, really play it up in a way you know it's supposed to be

funny, one often hiking their leg over the other's hip, then once they break from the kiss, they laugh and run off stage.

One of the biggest differences between this play and any other I have seen A-State put on is that Emma often directly addresses the audience. She clues us in on the thoughts inside her head, explains important background information, and complains about a number of things.

Not only does she address the audience, but she also asks rhetorical questions and brings them into the show. When Emma realizes who she has been in love with, she points to a person in the audience

and says, "You, did you know about this?" She waits for the person to answer or gesture, then says, "Why didn't you tell me?" By this point, the audience is laughing, and in her turmoil, she tells everyone to "stop laughing," which only makes everyone laugh harder.

Mr. Knightly, old friend and neighbor of the Woodhouses, often interrupts Emma's monologues and talks to the audience as well, while other characters ask Emma who she's talking to or why she's talking to herself.

Ella Scott truly brings Emma to life with her exaggerated facial expressions, body language, and line delivery. Audiences are brought to laughter simply by her reaction to a situation or piece of information.

Throughout the performance, we watch as Emma grows from a well-meaning but vain young lady into a compassionate young woman who learns to see beyond her own bias, confront her own flaws and fall in love.

If you enjoy period dramas, rom-coms, or stories of self-discovery, I highly recommend seeing this production.

There will be three more performances, Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2:30 p.m., in the Drama Theater. A-State students are admitted free with their student ID.



Photo by Amelia Young | Staff Writer

(Left) Isaiah Wallis as Mr. George Knightly, Judith Bossi as Mrs. Anne Weston and Ella Scott as Emma Woodhouse during opening weekend of "Emma."

"Gilmore Girls" turns 25



PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDb

(Left) Lauren Graham and Alexis Bledel as Lorelai and Rory Gilmore in "Gilmore Girls."

ALLIE CARSON

NEWS EDITOR

For 25 years now, "Gilmore Girls," known for its comforting feel and its fast dialogue, has been the staple fall show for many households.

This comfort show, however, has earned a spot in my year-round rotation and has influenced many parts of my life since I first saw the show.

"Gilmore Girls" is a show about Lorelai Gilmore and her teenage daughter Rory, whom she had at 16, living in small-town Stars Hollow, Connecticut.

The main conflict that began the show was Lorelai going to her parents' mansion to ask for money so she could send Rory to an expensive private school.

All Emily and Richard Gilmore ask for in return is dinner every Friday night, so they get the chance to be in Rory's life, something they normally only have the privilege of doing on holidays.

The Friday night dinner scenes are some of the most iconic scenes in the show. Lorelai will start talking about something random, like poodles or anvils, Emily would be tired

of the antics, Rory would just be there, either staying out of it or egging her mom/best friend on, and Richard usually stays quiet or backs Emily up.

Like all shows, there are relationship components. From the beginning, viewers wondered when and if Lorelai would date Luke Danes, the grumpy owner of the diner she goes to at least once a day.

But the main argument between fans has always been about Rory's boyfriends: First boyfriend and, personally, walking red flag Dean, bad boy reader Jess, and rich womanizer Logan. All boyfriends had their purpose in Rory's life.

The star of the show, however, is the dialogue. Fast-paced, clever, witty dialogue, and endlessly quotable, it's the heart of "Gilmore Girls." The actors play so well off each other that dialogue flows so naturally, making it easy to get immersed in the Gilmore world.

If you love early 2000s shows filled with pop culture references, lovable characters, witty characters, family relationships and small-town drama, then this isn't just a show. It's a lifestyle. It's a religion.

"The Life of a Showgirl" has Swifties 50/50

ALLIE CARSON

NEWS EDITOR

Taylor Swift's newest album, "The Life of a Showgirl," has sealed its fate as one of her most divisive albums. As for me, I think the album shines brighter than Opalite.

The album opens with a song titled "The Fate of Ophelia," which uses the Shakespearean story "Hamlet"

for inspiration. This song, in itself, gives the album the titular showgirl vibe, firmly establishing its place within the pop genre.

This song has everything: beat, flow and lyrics, which can be said for almost every song on the album. The music video for the song cements both the album title and the pop genre with how showy and fun it is.

It's hard to pick a favorite song from this album. The

first three songs, "The Fate of Ophelia," "Elizabeth Taylor" and "Opalite" are definitely up there, all having great lyrics. Interestingly, lyricism was something a lot of Swifties said was lacking in the new album. However, that cannot be more false.

It's just different lyrical genius.

Read full article online at astatetheherald.com

AHTZIRY ZUÑIGA

STAFF WRITER

It's nothing new that Taylor Swift has always been a girl for the headlines, and that's appropriate even in a literal sense. When there is a new album release, the world listens—but, as a fan of Swift, "The Life of a Showgirl" has proven to be a sad attempt at clinging to the spotlight.

Swift's very first album, "Taylor Swift", debuted

in 2008, when the singer-songwriter was just fifteen years old, and the artist's career successfully began in the realm of country music. Since then, Taylor Swift has transitioned into a highly renowned mainstream artist and has become a global sensation, with a career that has expanded itself over the worlds of pop, alternative rock, and indie folk.

In recent years, Swift has gained notoriety among

fans for her power in her complex and moving lyricism. Albums, such as sister-albums "Folklore" and "Evermore," as well as last year's release "The Tortured Poets Department," pronounced fame to Swift for the intricateness of her writing, with the ability to empathize with many of her listeners.

Read full article online at astatetheherald.com

"The Smashing Machine" is too real to thrill

ELIJAH TEMPLETON

LIFE EDITOR

If I had a nickel for every time a Safdie brother directed a film based on a relatively unknown competitor in a niche sport that was distributed by A24 in the year 2025, I'd have two nickels, which isn't a lot...

The first Safdie to go solo, Benny, came out literally swinging with "The Smashing Machine," an adaptation of the documentary of the same name profiling a window into the peak years of former MMA fighter, Mark Kerr (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson).

This film was highly anticipated by both fans of the Safdie brothers and casual movie-goers alike for its inclusion of The Rock in his first 'serious' dramatic role of his career.

While he does turn in an exceptionally grounded and immersive performance, the film itself feels somewhat dull.

Being adapted from a

documentary, the film's cinematography centers around the viewer feeling like they are getting true glimpses of everyday life in the world of mixed martial arts.

Shot from around hallway corners or through kitchen windows, the camera at all times feels both intrusive and invisible.

Especially so during scenes involving Kerr and his on/off girlfriend Dawn (Emily Blunt) where their performances cut

deep and invoke a feeling of guilt to even be witnessing.

The heart of the film is Kerr grappling with his own shortcomings in the harsh face of super-stardom.

An undefeated physical specimen who must confront who he is when the wins don't come so easily and his own identity when he's not a winning fighter.

Blunt and The Rock both turn in terrific performances in their respective roles, but the film's undying commitment to realism hurts the pacing and can make some scenes slog along.

The Rock may just get an Oscar nod for his work, but the film itself will likely not stick in the cultural zeitgeist as all involved may have hoped it would.

Nevertheless, it's a good debut film from one half of the Safdie brothers and bodes well for his future solo work.



COURTESY OF IMDb

Overall Score: 7/10

Student Speaks: "What's your go-to cheesy pick-up line?"



Photo by Ella Dobson | Staff Writer
Adam Arizaga is a sophomore theatre major from Russellville, Arkansas.

"My favorite is counting shoulders. You know, like "Let's count shoulders: 1, 2, 3, and 4," and you put your arm around them. I like to do it with my friends."



Photo by Ella Dobson | Staff Writer
Gracelyn Weaver is a first-year biological sciences major from Marion, Arkansas.

"When people fall on the ground and go "Wow, I just fell for you." It's good, classic, and funny. And I personally fall for it every time."



Photo by Ahtziry Zuñiga | Staff Writer
Kathryn Holmes is a first-year history major from Jonesboro.

"Can I follow you home? 'Cause my parents always told me to follow my dreams."



Photo by Ahtziry Zuñiga | Staff Writer
Carson Zirbel is a first-year English major from Jonesboro.

"Hey baby, did you fall from heaven?"



BANNED BOOKS @ A-STATE

To celebrate Banned Books Week, we compiled some popular banned books available at the library

