

By Iris Wiener

# Sassy Sweet

## The Wedding Singer Outshines With Big Hair and Collars Up

At first glance it seems to be just another horrible attempt to recreate a film on the Broadway stage. And this is not just any film spin-off, mind you — this is the reincarnation of a cheesy flick starring Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore. But these thoughts never make it past that first glance because of the sheer joy of this musical. Not since *Hairspray* has there been so much energy and enthusiasm in a production.

better than the film.

This is a musical, for one. Such sweet tunes as “It’s Your Wedding Day,” and pick-me-up “Come Out of the Dumpster,” dispel any comparison to the film, and celebrate the creativity that went into such a comical, endearing story. *The Wedding Singer* also spins a web of brightly characterized, endearing individuals.

Rock-star wannabe Robbie Hart is New Jersey’s favorite wedding singer. He’s the unlikely hero of every party, the ultimate master of ceremonies, the leader of the line dance. Then his fiancée leaves him at the altar. Shot through the heart, Robbie becomes a newlywed’s worst nightmare — a wedding singer bent on destroying other people’s weddings. Interestingly enough *The Wedding Singer* stars Comedy Central’s infamous comedian Stephen Lynch, whose act is known for the inclusion of music.

Laura Benanti takes on the role of Julia Sullivan. Benanti, who has previously been seen in *Into the Woods* and *Nine* opposite Antonio Banderas, has a soft talent that is perfect for the lovable naivete of her Julia.

Despite the aptitude of Lynch and Benanti, the supporting players really bring down the house in *The Wedding Singer*. Amy Spanger (*Urinetown*, *Kiss Me Kate*) plays Julia’s promiscuous friend Holly. She works it with her crimped hair and trashy fluorescent clothing — a sassy, youthful girl ultimately looking for love in all of the wrong places. Any lady knows that the right man is always the last man she would ever consider, and Matthew Saldivar’s sleazy dope Sammy is Holly’s match.

And of course there’s George, the token gay friend of Robbie and Sammy, rambunctiously played by Kevin Cahoon (*Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*). The guys have the audience in hysterics as they muse over the ‘joys’ of being alone in “Single,” one of the musical’s standout numbers.

The real stars of this show, however, are the costumes and set design. From checkered bedspreads to mullets, braids, and faux leather, set designer Scott Pask and costume designer Gregory Gale went for broke in re-creating the ‘80s without ever requiring the show to include the ‘80’s hits that permeated the film version.

*The Wedding Singer* has a heart of gold, a rare occasion in a year of dark, dramatic musicals. This *Singer* leaves its audience smiling for days.

The *Wedding Singer* is playing at the *Al Hirschfeld Theatre*. Call Telecharge at 212-239-6200, or visit [www.telecharge.com](http://www.telecharge.com) and [theweddingsingermusical.com](http://theweddingsingermusical.com). ■



*The Wedding Singer* features a catchy new score that pays homage to the pop songs of the ‘80s. The musical takes us back to 1985, a time when hair was big, greed was good, and collars were up. Complete with the rappin’ granny, the show mirrors the major plot points in the film, but as a whole, it is a completely new experience — arguably even

The role of Robbie Hart seems to have been written for the man behind hit CDs *The Craig Machine*, *Superhero*, and *Live at the El Ray*. He bounds across the stage, constantly working his on and offstage audiences. Lynch is not a trained singer, but what he accomplishes vocally is incredibly unique and entertaining.