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[re:jazz]

[re:jazz] (re:mix)

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Havergal

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Sharron Kraus

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack

Hedwig and the Angry Inch

(Hybrid)

US release date: 10 July 2001

UK release date: Available as import

by Matt Keppel

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By the Summer of 2001, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* has become a media phenomenon, in art-rock circles anyway. This motion picture started as an off-Broadway smash in the late '90s. It was the only glam rock musical in town so how could it not create a hipster buzz? Even former Brat-Packer Ally Sheedy got into the game, portraying the titular transsexual for a short run of the show.

Now show creator John Cameron Mitchell (who originated the role of Hedwig on stage and now screen) has taken his musical to the cinema and come home with an armful of awards and accolades. As everyone should know, these kinds of cult films are born, not made. They have to earn it, and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* does just that.

This soundtrack (after the previous stage version, it's the story's second recording) is flash with substance, Bowie-tinged ballads with balls. In short, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* is the small story of a big dreamer. A fey, teenage boy from East Berlin escapes to the Midwestern U.S. by marrying an American G.I., but the price of a new home is on the doctor's slab. Hedwig, as he dubs himself, undergoes a botched sex change operation and emerges with a mutilated "angry inch", neither man nor woman. It's not exactly a musical like Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. . . Or is it? Both heroines are looking for their Prince Charming and risk bodily mutilation to be with the one they love in a new world. But *Hedwig* doesn't have the same beautiful happy ending. S/he meets a local teen, Tommy, who wants to be a rock star and Hedwig sees that his dream comes true, at the expense of her own. It's a story that's played for pathos and not the easy laughs it could have milked. Oh yeah, there's also the music.

The soundtrack alternates from the glam rock guitar squall of "Tear Me Down" ("I'm the new Berlin Wall", Hedwig screams "just try and tear me down!") to beautiful, somber ballads like "Wicked Little Town" and "The Long Grift" that wouldn't have sounded out of place in the early '70s London world of T. Rex. Punk rave-ups like "Angry Inch" and "Exquisite Corpse" add an adequate Iggy Pop vibe.

Although the concept and book was written by Cameron Mitchell, the words and music were written by collaborator and guitarist Stephen Trask (who plays the band's, The Angry Inch, guitarist in the film). The soundtrack is a fond memento of the extremely visual story of *Hedwig*, a series of sounds that sound just as fine on their own. And when was the last time that a musical that started life as a stage production has rocked like this? Take that *Rent!*

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