‘High School Musical’ celebrates 20 years

By AVA HIGHLAND
News Editor

This year I’m turning 20 years old. And so does the movie that carried me through my childhood.

For a while now we’ve been experiencing nostalgic anniversaries: childhood songs turning 15, shows turning 10. Yet there’s something about seeing headlines reading something along the lines of “‘High School Musical’ turns 20” that’s just different.

In case you haven’t seen the movie, first, why? But in short, it follows a group of high schoolers at East High in Albuquerque, N.M. In true Disney Channel fashion, the characters fall into several cliques: jocks, nerds, drama students. Each clique breaks the “Status Quo,” finding a love for being on stage and making friends outside of their groups. So of course, they consistently break out in song too.

But the Wildcats’ story didn’t end after they finally decided they were “All in This Together” in the closing number. Disney Channel gave us two more movies that kept us hooked. We followed the Wildcats through summer vacation and then back to East High for their senior year.

So what kept us invested for three movies? And for some of us, what’s kept us hooked even now?

Maybe most notably, was actor Zac Efron gracing our screens as heartthrob and star basketball player Troy Bolton. Just like Glee’s Finn Hudson (Corey Monteith), Troy showed us that the star athletes could also sing show tunes. And didn’t that just make us fall in love even more?

But seriously, the movie showed our younger selves that people could move outside those cliques. Of course the movies and messages are cheesy, but that’s exactly what I loved to see.

And it wouldn’t be a Disney Channel original without a no-skips soundtrack and choreography from director Kenny Ortega. I know I’m not the only one that still remembers the choreography to “We’re All in This Together.”

All these things combined, I did think that once I got to high school, we too would break out into song at any given moment. Unfortunately that didn't happen, but a girl can dream.

Jan. 20 marked the official 20 year mark since we met the Wildcats, and several of the main cast members reminisced on their days at East High in a recent article by PEOPLE Magazine.

“We were having fun, learning as we went, and honestly just enjoying every moment together. I never could’ve imagined it would still mean so much to people 20 years later, or that a whole new generation would connect with it, and I’m grateful for that,” Efron told PEOPLE.

The cast reflected on how much they loved their days on set, not knowing how big the movie franchise would soon be.

“What I remember most is how unburdened it felt,” actor Lucas Grabeel, who played Ryan Evans said. “There



ILLUSTRATION BY KATERINA PARIZKOVA

wasn’t a machine yet — no mythology, no expectations, no sense of legacy. We were present: singing around the piano between takes, laughing at our silliness and mistakes, figuring it out together.

Since we last saw the Wildcats when they graduated from East High, rumors and fake trailers have circulated about a fourth movie in the series. Some were so realistic I thought the rumors were true.

Instead the iconic Sharpay Evans (Ashley French) took on New York City in her spin-off “Sharpay's Fabulous Adventure.” And later, Disney+ released “High School Musical: The Musical: The Series” in 2019.”

As great as they both were, nothing will ever be as good as the OG Wildcats. So for now we can keep rewatching the series and have hopeful delusions that one day we’ll see the Wildcats again.

Let's all go to the lobby

Why Drive-ins are still relevant

By JOANNA FARRELL
Associate Opinion Editor

In the 1950’s, Dwight D. Eisenhower was president, our country was just coming back from World War II and we were enthralled in two new wars.

Even though everything seemed bad, and it was, there was no shortage of entertainment in the ’50s. The movies were all the rage and television was starting to make its way into the average American home.

There is nostalgia that surrounds the 1950s that imparts itself on everyone. Besides the fact that it wasn’t the best time for women… or people of color… or poverty-stricken communities, there is still this feeling that life was simpler.

The lack of technology and the promise of the future all make the ’50s more appealing to an over automized society like ours.

Few experiences today that truly allow us to step away from our digitized life. One of those is the Drive-in movie theater.

The Drive-in provides a unique experience for lovers, movie goers and people who yearn for the nostalgia of days gone by. It’s simple, it doesn’t try too hard and there’s a reason that the drive-ins that exist today have been around for close to 80 years.

For those who have never been, the Drive-in can be a hard thing to explain the appeal of. In all its simplicity, it’s a dirt lot with little mounds and a couple of large projection screens. Often, there’s a little shack in the center with a variety of snacks and drinks to choose from. You connect your car to the radio station on the screen, the ads play and the movie starts just like a movie theater would.

However, the things that make the Drive-in special are not what I can describe to you in words. The Drive-in is an experience, it’s a feeling.

I’ve been going to the Drive-in since I was a little kid with my parents. I still remember the feeling of loading up our Minivan with blankets and pillows and laying in the trunk of the van with my parents while the movies played.

Now that I’m older I go with my boyfriend. He also didn’t understand the appeal of sitting in the car, parked in a dirt lot and watching a movie until I forced him to go with me. He loved it so much that now we make it a point to go at least once a year even if the movie selection sucks.

Do I remember the movies we watched? No.

But do I remember the way it felt turning to him and laughing, or chatting about parts of the movie without the fear of other movie goers side eyeing me for talking? Yes.

Something about a Drive-in in the summer is an experience everyone should have at least once.

Walking from the car, the cool nighttime breeze providing relief from the heat of the day, the gentle glow emitting from the snack shack and the lively atmosphere of lovers and family spending quality time together.

Like I said, Drive-ins are a feeling and an experience that I can’t describe to you. The old timey ads that have been running since the opening day, the snack bar that hasn’t been renovated… ever and being able to share an experience with someone you love is priceless.

Even if the drive in doesn’t appeal to you, find ways to slow down, ways to separate yourself from modernized society. The Drive-in is a great way to do that. You can also go to a local arcade or vintage themed diner and get the same feeling from a different environment.

For people looking to beat out technology for a night, Shady Glen is a great 1940s themed restaurant and the Mansfield Drive-In is, in my humble opinion, the best drive-in in the state.

Please understand that I am not romanticizing the 50’s, but rather, romanticizing an experience that allows us to step away from streaming services and the overstimulating experiences of the traditional movie theater.

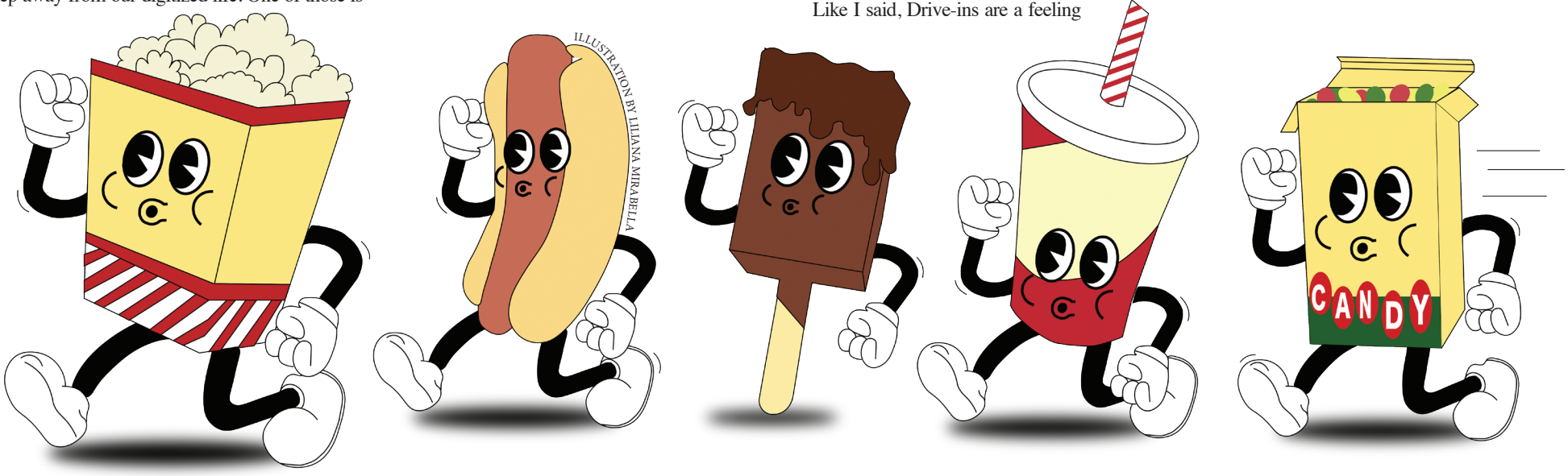


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