

Music Notes

TINSELTOWN TUNES INTO TEENS

Music comes of age in adolescent movies

By Michael Giltz

With Paramount's "Varsity Blues" scoring at the box office, followed by Miramax's highly successful "She's All That," the message is clear — teen movies are back. And accompanying the films, naturally, are a flood of adolescent-appealing soundtracks.

"Varsity Blues" (Hollywood Records) is a Top 40 hit CD. Expected to similarly attract teens' attention is the release on Tuesday of "Jawbreaker" (London Records), the soundtrack to Columbia Pictures' high school black comedy of the same name (opening Feb. 19), featuring songs by Donnas, Letters to Cleo and Shampoo. And the teen movie music madness will continue over the next few weeks when the soundtracks are released for Sony Pictures' "Go!" (Work Group), starring Katie Holmes of "Dawson's Creek," and "Cruel Intentions" (Virgin Records) with Sarah Michelle Gellar.

"She's All That," headlined by Freddie Prinze Jr. and Rachael Leigh Cook (another "Dawson's Creek" cast member), stands out simply because it *doesn't* have a soundtrack. But you can bet they wanted one. "We didn't have time," explains Randy Spendlove, Miramax's senior vice president of motion picture music. "The movie was finished in November and we decided to open it in January."

Because of the quick turnaround time, Miramax had to focus all of its attention on just a single — from the alternative band Sixpence None the Richer. The single, "Kiss Me," is used in the film's trailer and was turned into a video, airing on MTV.

"Jawbreaker" has taken this cashing in on teens and their musical tastes to another plateau, having actually cast the all-female punk-rock group Donnas, featured on the soundtrack, as the prom-night house band for a scene in the flick. One can't help but be reminded of the

Ramones' appearance in "Rock 'n' Roll High School" (1979).

"It's weird to me when directors don't pay attention to music," says "Varsity Blues" director Brian Robbins, who adds that he always admired writer/director John Hughes — often cited as the person who first melded teen movies and music — for keeping the soundtracks to his '80s classics as up to the minute as possible.

Robbins identifies Hughes' "The Breakfast Club" soundtrack and its number one hit single, "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds, as a major musical influence. "That song stayed with me all through high school," he says, which is why, when it came time to pick songs for his movie, the 35-year-old Robbins spent literally thousands of dollars at Tower Records and combed through his stacks of old CDs. "I had to have Van Halen's 'Hot for Teacher' in one scene," says Robbins, who otherwise stuck to new bands like Collective Soul and Fastball. He also used Green Day's "Nice Guys Finish Last" and Foo Fighters' "My Hero" — songs that teen-agers already know, but which play perfectly in the movie.

"The music has to strike a nerve," he says, "and be the right song for the right moment."

Both Robbins and Spendlove dismiss soundtracks that just throw together songs from a bunch of different artists. "People slam songs onto the end of a movie and it just doesn't work," says Spendlove.

But thanks to Hughes and their own fondness for the sounds of their youth, that happens less and less, especially since teens know a prepackaged compilation when they see one.

If "Varsity Blues" and the others are lucky, they may mimic the success of last year's "Can't Hardly Wait." That last-day-of-high-school movie made about \$30 million at the box office and is already on video. But its soundtrack is *still* on the charts after six months.



A hit single by Sixpence None the Richer is making the teen flick "She's All That" all the richer.



"Jawbreaker" could break the bank thanks to the band Donnas.