



**HABIT-FORMING HIT: Patina Miller (center) & the cast of *Sister Act*. Photo: Joan Marcus**

*Theater Review*

# Hallelujah! *Sister Act* is surprise hit of season



## SISTER ACT

Book by Cheri & Bill Steinkellner

Additional book material by Douglas Carter Beane

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by Glenn Slater

Directed by Jerry Zaks

Choreographed by Anthony Van Laast

Broadway Theatre

1681 Broadway at 53rd Street

(212-239-6200), [SisterActBroadway.com](http://SisterActBroadway.com)

By David NouNou

This season has spawned a myriad of musicals based on movies, from delightfully wonderful ones to pure and utter dreck, starting with bona-fide crowd-pleasers like *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* to such atrocities as *Spider-Man: Turn off the Dark*, *Catch Me If You Can*, and *Wonderland*. Thankfully, *Sister Act*, now playing on Broadway after a successful run in London, is a welcome surprise. It has been no secret that I loved *Priscilla*; I can now add *Sister Act* to my list of favorites. As for the rest, at the risk of sounding vulgar, you can just flush them. The similarity between *Sister Act* and *Priscilla* is that they both are there to entertain, and both do so in a grand manner. The difference is that *Priscilla* has a pre-existing jukebox score and *Sister Act* has a totally original score, and what a marvelous one it is indeed. From all the original musicals that opened this year, the score by Alan Menken (music) and Glenn Slater (lyrics) is by far the best from the current fare on Broadway, and is magnificently orchestrated by Doug Besterman. In a fair and just world, *Sister Act* should win Tony Awards for score and orchestrations. The songs range from classic disco to soulful Motown, and many will have you humming along with

glee.

Originally the movie was set in Las Vegas in the 1990s, but it has now shifted to Philadelphia in the late 1970s to feature the fantastic Philly/disco-era sound. The story still revolves around Deloris Van Cartier (Patina Miller), who witnesses a murder and is sent to a convent to lay low and out of harm's way from the killers. At the convent, she butts heads with the Mother Superior, the ever-wonderful Victoria Clark. Deloris earns the love and admiration of her sister nuns, and two in particular: Mary Robert, the meek (Marla Mindelle), and Mary Patrick, the jovial (Sarah Bolt), both of whom are adorable in their own way. As Deloris teaches them to become a chorus, she in turn learns about love family and humility.

Patina Miller as Deloris is gorgeous and possesses a beautiful, God-given voice. However, she lacks the grit of a Philly girl necessary for the part. She is sweet when she needs a rougher edge. She is a polished diamond, when in fact a diamond in the rough is called for. Picture someone like Whoopi Goldberg and you get the idea of what I am talking about. Victoria Clark as Mother Superior is perfect. In fact, she has some of the best lines in the show that are not trite and hackneyed, and her razor-sharp comic timing and delivery is priceless. She is a pro at work as usual.

*Sister Act* is a pure delight. However, by the middle of Act II, it starts petering out and runs out of original ideas. The book by Douglas Carter Beane and Bill and Cheri Steinkellner, and the direction by Jerry Zaks, all lose steam and start slacking off and are reduced to silly chases toward the end of the show. Up to that point, Mr. Zaks was bringing in a homer. What keeps the musical buoyant until the very end is the delicious score and disco sound, courtesy of Mr. Menken and Mr. Slater. They are the heroes and saviors of the musical, but overall *Sister Act* is an enjoyable evening that never fails to amuse audiences. Hallelujah! *Sister Act* is the feel-good musical of the spring 2011 theater season.

***Published April 28, 2011***

***Reviewed at press performance on April 27, 2011***

**Editor's Note: [www.StageZine.com](http://www.StageZine.com), celebrating our 1-Year Anniversary on the Internet. We want to express our gratitude to all the theater PR professionals, industry organizations, and, most of all, our readers, followers and fans for their continued support and kind words throughout the past year, helping make [www.StageZine.com](http://www.StageZine.com) a success.**

## **Broadway Listings**

## NouNou On Broadway

Broadway Capsule Reviews by David NouNou

### ORIGINAL MUSICALS



**SING OUT, SISTERS:** (left to right) Alena Watters, Rashindra Scott, & Patina Miller in *Sister Act*.

Photo: Joan Marcus



### SISTER ACT

*Sister Act* is pure delight in large part due to the wonderful score by Alan Menken (music) and Glenn Slater (lyrics). In all honesty, I did not have much hope for this 1992 Whoopi Goldberg romp as yet another movie recycled into a musical. There have been so many movies turned into awful musicals this year; just read the list of StageZine's reviews and you will know which ones they are, but I am glad to report that *Sister Act* works beautifully as a musical.

Patina Miller (Deloris Van Cartier), Victoria Clark (Mother Superior), all the delightful singing nuns, the fabulous disco/Philly sound score and rhapsodic orchestrations keep this musical running smoothly until the end, despite the fact that it runs out of ideas around the middle of Act II. Regardless, there is enough merriment to go around for a night of theatrical roof-raising entertainment.

**BROADWAY THEATRE, 1681 Broadway at 53rd Street, (212-239-6200).**

[www.SisterActbroadway.com](http://www.SisterActbroadway.com)

Copyright © April 28, 2011, StageZine.com

*www.StageZine.com, celebrating our 1-Year Anniversary on the Internet*