



Zurin Villanueva and Garrett Turner, and cast, in the Broadway tour of “Tina - The Tina Turner Musical” at Nederlander Theatre. **MURPHYMADE PHOTOS**

REVIEW ‘TINA — THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL’ ★★★

A rush of musical stardom

By Chris Jones
Chicago Tribune

The 2019 Broadway musical “Tina — The Tina Turner Musical” played its 200th performance on tour at the Nederlander Theatre on Wednesday night, and the achievement was marked with a great responsive roar from a Chicago audience clearly thrilled to be in the presence of a queen.

A musical monarch who has shed years, to boot. That’s the secret sauce of jukebox musicals: They roll back time. As played by Zurin Villanueva, who is excellent in the role, Tina Turner (who is 83) regains her youth and the force of one of the great voices and personas in musical history. People were having a blast.

Know that if you see the show, you might not see Villanueva. Many jukebox shows split the star into different eras, performed by age-appropriate performers (the strategy used in past shows dedicated to Donna Summer and Cher, among many others).

“Tina” on Broadway used Adrienne Warren to command the entire nightly proceedings. On the road, Villanueva shares the role with Naomi Rodgers, and tour marketers are trying to pitch the touring Tinas as equal partners.

But for the whole Chicago run, you’ll apparently either see Villanueva or Ari Groover, an understudy. But I wouldn’t sweat that.

There are many talented singers



Zurin Villanueva in the Broadway tour of “Tina - The Tina Turner Musical.”

surrounding this show, and another jukebox secret is that the top-tier Broadway performers often are technically superior vocalists to the stars themselves. Not that you’d ever hear that mentioned in a press conference.

I can only review what I have seen, and Villanueva certainly delivers all you could ask. As jukebox shows go, “Tina,” which is written by Katori Hall, goes deeper

into the star’s psychological state than is typical in the genre.

Hall wanted to write a story of self-empowerment as Turner, abused as a child, finds herself trapped in another abusive relationship with Ike Turner, only to find her sense of self in her 40s after she escapes to London and risks her livelihood on musical reinvention.

When I saw the show on Broadway, I thought the piece was really

more Hall than Turner, in that it said little new about Turner’s amazing creative life in London, where she hung with Mick Jagger and David Bowie and remade herself across genres.

“Tina” spends too long on the early days as Turner suffers through the blows of Ike, whom she vanquished in reality. And, since

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REVIEW ‘TED LASSO’ ★★½

Titular soccer coach has lost the spring in his step

By Nina Metz
Chicago Tribune

“Ted Lasso” began as a fish-out-of-water comedy, of the eternally upbeat Ted running headlong into the British skepticism of anyone invested in the Premier League soccer team — sorry, *football club* — known as AFC Richmond. With his can-do spirit winning over the doubters, Season 2 took a different tack, revealing a more complicated man behind the mustache and a deep well of sadness beneath his sunny facade. With Season 3, it’s too early to tell what the overall theme might be just yet; only four of the 12 episodes were provided to critics. But Ted has noticeably lost a spring in his step.

So has the series. Some of that is due to the expanded episode length. The first season stuck pretty close to 30-minute episodes. That inched upward the following season.



Jason Sudeikis stars as “Ted Lasso.” **COLIN HUTTON/APPLE TV+**

This time, episodes are in the 44-50 minute range — roughly the equivalent of two half-hour

network comedies — and it makes you wonder why they didn’t just slice things up differently and

make it a season of 24 half-hour episodes instead of a bloated 12. As it is, the pacing meanders and the show’s signature tonal assuredness feels off-balance.

I wonder if that matters, though, when we’re talking about a show filled with characters with whom you *want* to spend time. Creators Jason Sudeikis (who also stars as Ted), Bill Lawrence, Brendan Hunt (who plays coach Beard) and Joe Kelly have laid enough groundwork to ensure that you’re invested in these people — from team owner Rebecca (Hannah Waddingham) to PR maven Keeley (Juno Temple) to the perfectly grumpy Roy Kent (Brett Goldstein) — even if the show itself has lost some of its comedic snap and focus.

There’s a melancholic cloud hanging over Ted this season. No longer burdened with hiding his panic attacks, he’s an aimless man simply going through the

motions. “I guess I do sometimes wonder what the heck I’m still doing here,” he says. “I mean, I know why I came. It’s the stickin’ around I can’t quite figure out.” The show doesn’t seem to know either, at least in the season’s early going. But the writers of the series are too smart to plant seeds they have no intention of growing.

This year, the sports punditry have picked Richmond to finish last. Underdogs yet again! But a star player from Italy suddenly becomes available and he might just improve their chances — as well as upset the team’s delicate balance.

Keeley’s unshakable brightness remains intact. She has her own PR company now but is struggling to run it the way that she wants. She and Roy are in splitsville, a breakup from which they are both quietly reeling.

Rebecca looks fabulous as

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REVIEW 'EXTRAPOLATIONS' ★★½

Series takes on climate change and the future

By **Nina Metz**
Chicago Tribune

What might our lives look like decades from now, when the effects of climate change have progressed even further? That's the premise of "Extrapolations," Apple TV+'s star-studded series from Scott Z. Burns. Burns might be best known as the screenwriter of 2011's "Contagion," which anticipated many of the fears and outcomes of the pandemic. He's doing something similar as it pertains to our ongoing climate disaster. Of flooding and fires. Or droughts and air so polluted that people must carry a personal oxygen supply with them. The series jumps forward over the course of eight episodes, beginning in the year 2037 — not that far in the future! — and ending in 2070.

It's also a meditation on the evolution of technology, along with stubbornly entrenched corporate greed that is making the planet increasingly inhospitable to life.

There's a lot to admire about the show's ambitions, even if they're not fully realized. The psychological fallout is palpable. A low-level despair and resignation has settled over everything and you might argue that's happened in the real world already. You would be right, but it's not hard to imagine that deepening. Even so, life goes on somewhat unabated for those lucky enough to have a financial cushion. People still have dinner parties. They still fall in love. The production design envisions a future that is at once recognizable but distinct from our own present moment.

The first episode is a cacophonous scene-setter. It's one of the weaker chapters of the series, but it pinged all my anxieties and paints a stark picture: Street protests are futile when ruthless captains of industry are dictating the path forward. Matthew Rhys



Kit Harington plays a cold-blooded billionaire captain of industry who profits off climate change in "Extrapolations." ZACH DILGARD/APPLE TV+

plays a sleazy real estate developer who sneers at anything but profits. When the sea levels rose? "We made a fortune retrofitting the buildings. And guess what? When it goes up another couple of inches, we'll retrofit it again and make even more money."

Here's what you need to know about global warming, he says: "It will all go to (expletive) at the end of the century, one hundred percent. We'll be dead — we'll have to miss it — but we'll be smiling in our gold-plated coffins, so let's focus on the now." The scene is blunt and artless and Rhys' performance lays it on so thick that anyone watching who might qualify as a real-world equivalent will likely shrug off the critique, able to assure themselves: "I'm not like that."

A pop star (Heather Graham) has accompanied this creep and his dental veneers on a business trip to Russia, and as they talk in their hotel suite, the view outside is of blue skies, palm trees and the ocean in the distance. There are sounds of seagulls. "Where is that?" she asks looking out the window. Some-

where tropical, he tells her: "I'm not even sure it exists."

She clicks the remote and reality comes into view (gray, urban St. Petersburg) and you realize: Oh, it's a smart window.

These two qualities — the technology that enables something like a smart window, and the crass "let's pillage the earth before we die" mentality that makes a smart window so surreal and pointless — are constantly being interwoven over the course of the season. It's lucrative to be on the wrong side of right.

I like that "Extrapolations" is asking serious questions. It's not a hectoring approach but one designed to be entertaining, its themes delivered in a gleaming package filled with boldface names: Meryl Streep, Kit Harington, Diane Lane, Gemma Chan, David Schwimmer, Keri Russell and more.

The series is conspicuously focused on either the comfortably middle class or the ultrarich, the latter of whom are forever manipulating the levers of power and global resource management. The people who experience the worst

effects of these decisions, losing access to water or livable environments, are mostly an abstraction. It makes you wonder who the target audience for this series actually is — and whether it will have its intended effect. These are all individualized stories and I found it curious that "Extrapolations" never contemplates the possibility of collection action and what that might look like against seemingly unstoppable — but not entirely invulnerable — corporate and political interests.

Another running thought: Why do environmentalists not exist in this vision of the future? And by that I mean: Regular people who are environmental activists in their own daily lives.

In one episode, Sienna Miller plays a conservationist working for a company that collects DNA-based intellectual property. The goal: To bring back extinct species at some point in the future, be they elephants, wolves or humpback whales. If you thought zoos were unethical now, this anticipates just how much worse things can get. It's all driven by potential profits.

Another episode starring Edward Norton debates the merits of geoengineering, which is premised on the idea that dumping chemicals into the atmosphere can lower temperatures. The stakes are dire; maybe any attempt to stop global warming is worth a try. But no one can predict what will happen once you crop-dust the planet. The outcomes could create a whole new set of problems (and corruptions).

As the series heads further into the future, tech innovations play a bigger role. One episode centers on a man (Tahar Rahim) who earns his living as a sim. Using AI technology, he can transform his appearance into anyone of his clients' choosing. Usually it's a dead loved one and his appointments function as brief moments of reincarnation, even if the client knows it's not real. Another episode starring Marion Cotillard, Forest Whitaker and Tobey Maguire plays out like a mediocre riff on "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" with a futuristic backdrop. The finale is a dystopian courtroom drama, putting

a billionaire on trial for his crimes of ecocide, but the story lacks the narrative snap and structure of a good legal drama.

Only two episodes really stand out for me. In one, Daveed Diggs plays a rabbi in Miami trying to keep his temple from flooding; in the meantime, congregants wear rainboots to services. The episode is contemplative and also angry in all the right ways — instead of just adjusting to a new normal, younger generations will be asking the harsh questions: Why is this happening? What is this all for? The episode takes place during Passover, and the story of Moses and the plagues becomes an overt metaphor.

But the episode is also funny and I think this is key. The rabbi's mother considers taking a "relo" deal — relocating north where temperatures are cooler — and he tries to convince her otherwise. You love it in Miami, he says. And your doctor is here. "I'm moving to Milwaukee actually," her doctor pipes in. "I took the relo deal — not bad, I can share the details if you'd like. They threw in an assault rifle as an incentive."

As things worsen, what does that mean for your average person whose mere existence becomes increasingly fraught? An episode that takes place in India gives us a glimpse. The year is 2059 and a young man is hired to drive a truck carrying unknown cargo to a particular location.

It's the details that stand out in this episode. Temperatures are so hot that it's unsafe to be outside under the sun, so there's a daytime curfew. Life really only exists at night. But at one point the pair is forced to travel during the day. "If you're driving on pavement, pull off to dirt," they're instructed, "the blacktop tends to melt."

Where to watch: Apple TV+

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REVIEW 'SHAZAM! FURY OF THE GODS' ★

Superhero sequel's snark-filled approach past expiration date

By **Katie Walsh**
Tribune News Service

There's an exasperating trend in superhero movies that has reached the end of its shelf life and needs to be chucked. Back in the 2010s, a light touch on the tone seemed fresh and funny, with quippy, ironic dialogue popularized by Joss Whedon's "The Avengers" that felt revolutionary, and snarky, motor-mouthed performances from stars such as Ryan Reynolds in "Deadpool" that were downright radical. But one whiff of the "Shazam!" sequel "Shazam! Fury of the Gods," and you'll find that this overly jokey approach is past its expiration date.

"Shazam! Fury of the Gods" is exceedingly grating, labored and annoying, and that's in large part due to star Zachary Levi's utterly confounding performance as Shazam, the superhero alter ego of teenage Billy Batson (Asher Angel). In 2019's "Shazam!," also directed by David F. Sandberg, there was something charming about Levi's boyish performance, a grown man playing Superman with all the aw-shucks wonder of a teenager. In the four years hence, the sthick has grown



Zachary Levi stars in the sequel "Shazam! Fury of the Gods." WARNER BROS. PICTURES

old, or Levi is simply laying it on too thick, adopting a vaguely urban accent, speech peppered with tired slang and a randy attitude.

The biggest problem with his performance is that it's completely out of step with his younger counterpart, which was an issue in the first film, too. Angel's Billy is a more grounded, even an anxious teenager, worrying about his large, multicultural foster family and his role in it as he gets older. When he Shazams himself into Shazam, thanks to the magic granted to him by a wizened wizard (Djimon Hounsou), the Levi version of Billy suddenly becomes arrogant

and mouthy.

Levi's performance may be the crown jewel of nonsense swirling at the center of "Shazam! Fury of the Gods," but the film around it doesn't help matters. It is ugly, noisy and poorly written (the script is by Henry Gayden and "Fast & Furious" writer Chris Morgan), which is a shame, because director Sandberg has churned out some reliably inspired gems, such as "Lights Out" and "Annabelle: Creation." But "Fury of the Gods," which boasts an almost laughably random cast (Helen Mirren, Lucy Liu and Rachel Zegler play a trio of goddess sisters), is

excruciating.

We know this film is set in Philadelphia only because Shazam and his superhero pals have been dubbed "The Philadelphia Fiascos," and Liu's Kalypso plants a golden apple that sprouts mythological beasts in the middle of Citizens Bank Park, where the Philadelphia Phillies play. A Wolf Blitzer chyron reading "Philadelphia trapped under strange dome" is the only true laugh of the movie, an unintentional one at that.

Despite these references, there is no sense of place — the action mostly takes place on top of buildings, and there's a portal to a green-screen nightmare mythical realm where the goddess sisters do their evil business. Visually, it is a mess, with CGI that looks straight out of a CW show.

The juvenile tone, focus on a family-friendly story and painfully explicated themes and lessons clearly indicate that this film is squarely aimed at a younger audience. But just because this film is for kids doesn't mean it has to be this bad.

MPA rating: PG-13 (for sequences of action and violence, and language)
Running time: 2:10
How to watch: In theaters

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When: Through April 2
Where: Nederlander Theatre, 24 W. Randolph St.
Running time: 2 hours, 30 minutes
Tickets: \$52.50–\$152.50 at 800-775-2000 and www.broadwayinchicago.com

'Ted Lasso'

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always, all stiletto heels and perfectly tailored pencil skirts, but has regressed back to obsessing over her ex Rupert (Anthony Head), a snob of the worst kind who owns rival team West Ham. Rupert has lured away Nate (Nick Mohammed), Richmond's kit man-turned-coaching ace, and that's one of the more meaningful wrinkles of the season.

Journalist Trent Crimm (James Lance) is writing a book about Richmond and as a result, he's been invited into the fold. And the players are as endearing and delightfully antic as ever, even if Sam Obisanya (Toheeb Jimoh) doesn't have much to do besides being the object of Rebecca's subtle but longing stares.

Coach Beard remains his usual oddball self, although I prefer the old contrast of Ted's chatty optimism and Beard's still-waters-run-deep quiet reticence of the first season. The show has shifted away from that and maybe it's because Hunt wanted a bit more to do, character-wise. But it's made Beard less of an enigma and that also disrupts some of the show's original comedic framework.

If the writing doesn't quite pop, there's the occasional line that does stand out. Ted's description of rugby: "If American football and sumo wrestling gave birth to a baby with huge muscular thighs all caked in mud." Or this pearl of wisdom courtesy of Rebecca: "Crying is like an orgasm for the soul." Chicagoans will note an offhand joke Ted makes that references The Cubby Bear and, considering Hunt is from here and Sudeikis spent many formative years in the city as well, it's a nice

hat tip.

"Ted Lasso" has gradually become more of a light drama than a comedy, but it's such a pleasant one that it seems churlish to even point this out. In that dramatic vein, the show's depiction of Nate is more compelling than I might have anticipated. The series has never been particularly interested in validating the man-child archetype, but it is interested in how insecurity can manifest itself into toxic behavior and Nate is the epitome of that.

His hair has turned almost entirely gray, as if to visually convey that he has shed what he perhaps viewed as the meek, simpering modesty of his youth and has now come into his own as a man. Except he doesn't know how to be a man at all. Not really. He's rude and arrogant but he's still awkward deep down. There's something so dark and complex about what they're doing with this character. To combat his feelings of inadequacy, he overcompensates with a bravado that gives off all kinds of dangerous incel red flags. I'm fascinated to see how his arc is resolved. This may be the final season for the show and there's a silent question dangling over all of the Nate scenes: Is "Ted Lasso" the kind of series to end on what would probably be a more realistic note, with Nate doubling down on his worst impulses? I suspect not, but it would be a radical choice.

"Brevity is nice but sometimes clarity is the true soul of wit," someone says. Time will tell if the show's third season follows suit.

Where to watch: Apple TV+

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'Tina'

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these shows also have to be fun for fans, the show then has to effect some kind of uneasy reconciliation between the two when, frankly, Tina's life had moved to Europe and on to something far more extraordinary.

That's still my view, although I get that Hall wanted to tell a story of overcoming the past rather than a more wonkish look at Tina's amazing catalog and European stardom.

Fair enough, and I'd note in the tour that I found the scenes with Ike (played here by Garrett Turner) to be less cartoonish than

on Broadway, and thus far more disturbing. Garrett Turner dives admirably deep into the man's troubled personality.

But the overall message of the show is triumphant. It's an interesting piece and a very solid tour.

And that wall of sound, nicely mixed at the Nederlander, is a rush.