

McCartney writing 'It's A Wonderful Life' stage musical

LOS ANGELES, July 18, (Agencies): The pop superstar who once released a movie and album called "Give My Regards to Broad Street" really does have designs on Broadway, after all. It was revealed Wednesday that Paul McCartney has already written a song score for a stage musical adaptation of the 1946 Frank Capra film classic "It's A Wonderful Life".

The former Beatle, who wrapped up a tour with a rapturously received show Saturday at Dodger Stadium, has been at work for some time with writer Lee Hall – responsible for "Billy Elliot" on stage and the "Rocketman" screenplay – and British producer Bill Kenwright, according to published reports confirmed by Variety.

"Writing a musical is not something that had ever really appealed to me," said McCartney in a statement obtained by the Associated Press. "But Bill and I met up with Lee Hall and had a chat and I found myself thinking this could be interesting and fun. 'It's A Wonderful Life' is a universal story we can all relate to."

The aim is to launch a production in late 2020 in the UK with a later move to Broadway.

How far along is he? Far, according to a report in the New York Post from a writer who says he's already heard McCartney's recordings of 10 songs.

"On a recent trip to London, I got to listen to McCartney's stunning demo tracks," writes Johnny Oleksinski. "The songwriter segues eas-

ily into the musical theater style, while still giving his diehard fans that soulful McCartney sound. Every time a Beatle sings, an angel gets his wings. On the CD, the singer performs every role from George Bailey to Mr Potter and even tries his hand at acting. The more than 10 finished songs sound like a bona fide lost Beatles album, with one spectacular number's rousing ending bringing to mind the 'Na Na Na Na Na's of 'Hey Jude'."

Oleksinski reports that the producer obtained rights to the film from Paramount in 2016 and reached out to McCartney, who took an interest and "mailed him the opening song" last year. "Our hero was a musical theater writer!" Kenwright told the Post.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: There's music in the air for Showtime. The premium cable network has made a series commitment to a yet-to-be-titled musical drama series executive produced by **Alicia Keys, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul.**

The series, which will be produced by Fox 21 Television Studios, "traverses generations to tell an emotionally complex family story that interweaves modern-day and 1959 Detroit, centering on a mystery uncovered by a young musician who moves back to her childhood home," according to the network.

Pasek and Paul, the songwriting team behind "La La Land", "The

Greatest Showman" and "Dear Evan Hansen", will contribute music to the series. "The SpongeBob Musical's" **Kyle Jarrow** will write and executive produce. **Marc Platt**, whose deep well of credits includes "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert", "The Band's Visit" and "La La Land", will executive produce alongside "Nashville" exec producer R.J. Cutler and "Grease: Live!" producer Adam Siegel.

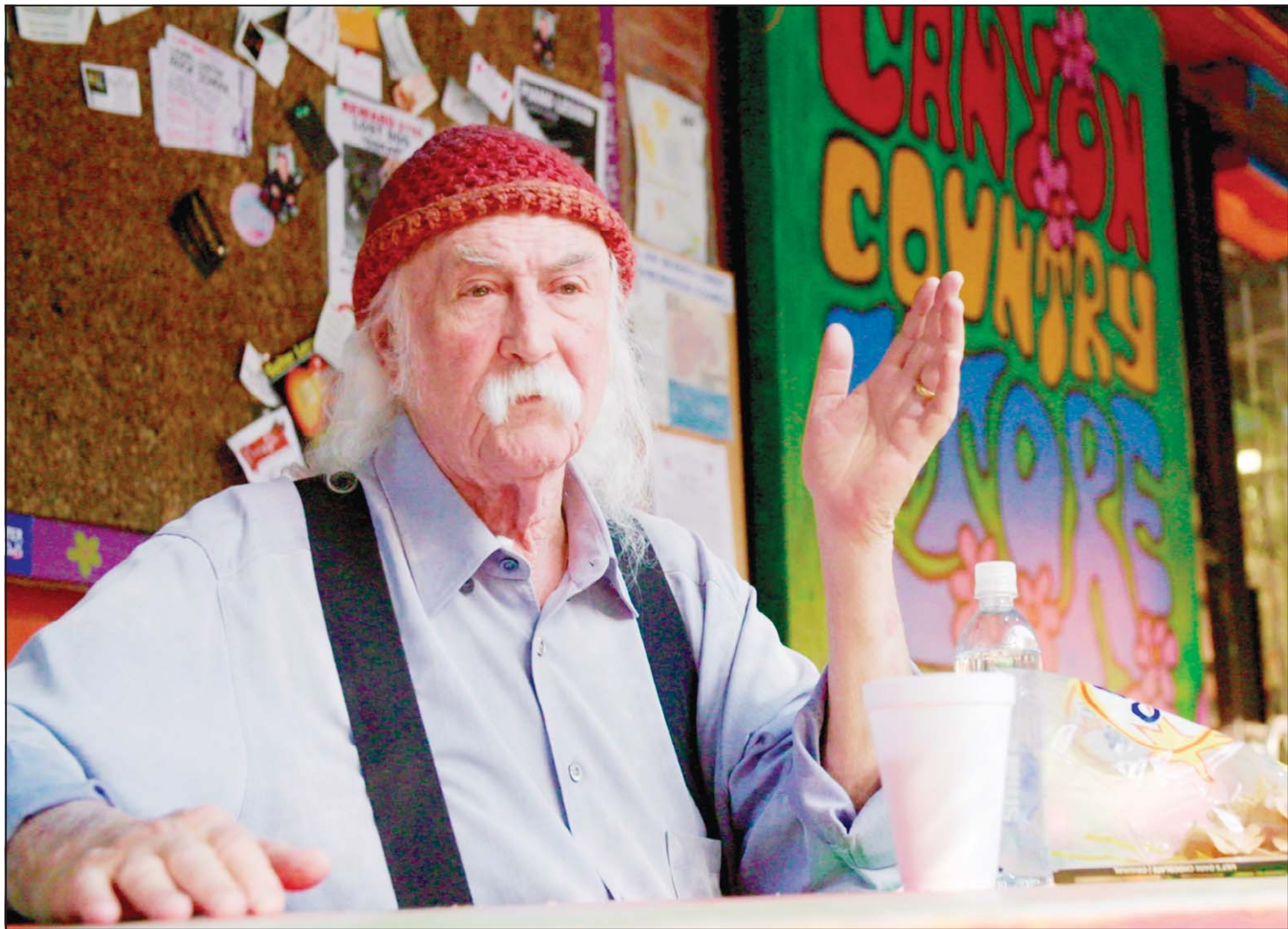
"We have always been intrigued by the prospect of doing a Showtime musical series, but only if the songs could add to the depth and complexity of a great character drama. Nobody does that better than Pasek and Paul and Marc Platt ... so when they came to us along with a global superstar like Alicia, a talented writer like Kyle, and excellent producers like Adam and R.J., we were all in," said Showtime president of entertainment **Gary Levine.**

The team collectively has dozens of accolades on their shelves. Keys is a 15-time Grammy-winning singer-songwriter. A musician, producer, actress, author and activist, she has been on screen in "The Secret Life of Bees", "The Nanny Diaries", "Empire" and other productions. She also exec produced "The Inevitable Defeat of Mister & Pete".

Pasek and Paul won an Oscar and a Golden Globe for "La La Land", a Golden Globe and Grammy for "The Greatest Showman" and a Tony and Grammy for "Dear Evan Hansen". Jarrow's "SpongeBob SquarePants" was nominated for a Tony, while his "A Very Merry Unauthorized Children's Scientology Pageant" won an Obie.

Music

Variety



This image released by Sony Pictures Classics shows musician David Crosby in a scene from the documentary 'David Crosby: Remember My Name'. (AP)

Film

Documentary shows musician in his hippy glory

New Crosby docu is loving, too loving

By Mark Kennedy

The final image of David Crosby in a new documentary about the singer-songwriter shows him in his hippie glory, spotting a video camera filming him. He roguishly sticks out his tongue.

It's sort of an apt gesture to sum up "David Crosby: Remember My Name" director A.J. Eaton's fascinating and gentle attempt to see what makes this irascible two-time Rock and Roll Hall of Famer tick. Over the course of an hour and half, we learn a ton but never come much closer to understanding him. It's as if he traveled back in time to flip us the bird just to mock us for trying.

For viewers only vaguely familiar with this white-haired folk-rock icon with a drooping mustache and an ever-present red knit cap, the documentary nicely charts Crosby's life and career, generally in chronological order but often flaring out to deal with themes like his addictions and loves. (Viewers are advised to come knowing something about the time period. Like, you're best knowing who this Joni Mitchell lady is before watching.)

Crosby's life and art intersect key moments in American history – the 1970 Kent State shootings, Woodstock, the Vietnam War, "Easy Rider" among them. He was a member of three major groups in music history – The Byrds, Crosby, Stills & Nash, and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. He served time in prison, had a liver transplant and is still making excellent music.

But we'll remember his name as much for the songs as for the destructive force he became. None of his former bandmates talk to him. It's not that they lost touch – they actively hate him. "I was a difficult cat," he admits at one point.

Finding out why becomes a key focus of the documentary. Various theories are floated – a withholding father, a girlfriend's death in a car crash, addiction to heroin and cocaine. (But it may not be fair to blame the drugs since his bandmates hated his guts when those guys were sober, too.) This towering figure in music seems isolated, with just the company of his wife and

dogs, horses and cats.

The film contains wonderful stories from Crosby – why he never liked Jim Morrison of The Doors, when Young auditioned for the band and how Mitchell broke up with him. Unfortunately, there isn't time to explore how he became the sperm donor for two kids parented by Melissa Etheridge and Julie Cypher.

Opinions

We get a few stray opinions on Crosby from Young, Nash, Glenn Frey, Jackson Browne, and his wife, Jan Dance. The reasons for why Crosby is so polarizing are politely danced around and his worst behavior is elided. What about that famous time Crosby stopped a recording session because his crack pipe broke? Or when he freebassed under his coat while flying first class?

Although Crosby acknowledges he did and said awful things, the film needs more voices of people fed up with his behavior and why it broke them apart. That's the film's Achilles heel: It's overly reverential. Crosby is rarely challenged. (At one point, he says he has eight cardiac stents and says that's the limit a patient can have. Nonsense.)

Another quibble is about a figure who flits in and out of the film – Cameron Crowe, who made the semi-autobiographical "Almost Famous" based in part on hanging out with Crosby, Stills & Nash. Crowe is a co-producer of the documentary and has lent the filmmakers old interviews he did as well as gently questioning Crosby on camera for this film. He's sort of ghostly midwife for Eaton but without having any skin in the game.

Eaton uses archive footage and photos, concert outtakes and, a little weirdly, cartoons to illustrate key moments in Crosby's life. Mostly his subject is on the move, seated in the back seat of an SUV as he rolls on to the next gig or visits key places in his youth.

These moments actually offer a sly insight into a demanding man who is liable to criticize the SUV's driver – "Take a left!" – as much as the filmmakers – "There's no cinematic value here," he grouses at one pit stop. But

he may have a point on another scene: Crosby stands outside the house in Laurel Canyon where Crosby, Stills & Nash first made music and the camera lifts up, hopefully – but goes no further. Crosby is left to awkwardly narrate outside. It's clumsy filmmaking – either go in or cut it out. That's the problem with the overall film, too – it stands outside respectfully and just doesn't go for it.

"It's not easy. It's hard being naked in public," David Crosby, the legendary troubadour of classic rock, reflected at Tuesday night's New York City premiere of "David Crosby: Remember My Name". "I don't know what to do here. There's no guitars, no drums," he laughed.

"They'll see a real guy. They'll see who I am. And I think it's better that they see an honest portrayal than they see some kind of fake. At least they can learn from what they see." Crosby told Variety on the red carpet. Following the artist along a 2017 tour, "David Crosby: Remember My Name" depicts the 77-year-old as he contends with the inevitability of death, and, through memory, traces the course of his 50-year career, portraying a musician whose battle with drug addiction, ego and anger fueled a volatility that's cost all but the music he made. For Crosby, that's the point.

"Documentaries these days are shine jobs. They generally do not tell you the truth. They tell you 'Oh, I discovered California, and right after that I invented electricity, and aren't I cute?' And I'm not. I'm not cute," Crosby said at the premiere.

"I'm a difficult guy and I've been through a whole lot of stuff. I've done some good work. If you want to see a documentary, you want to know about that person. You want to know what's going on in their head. You want to know what they care about. You want to know what matters to them. What they're afraid of. Who they love. At least that's what I want to see."

"David Crosby: Remember My Name", a Sony Pictures release, is rated R for "language, drug material and brief nudity." Running time: 95 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. (Agencies)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

FRIDAY-SATURDAY, JULY 19-20, 2019

LOS ANGELES: Jimmi Simpson will play a key role in "Unhinged", Variety has learned.

He joins an impressive cast that includes Oscar-winner **Russell Crowe** and **Caren Pistorius**. Solstice Studios is producing the psychological thriller, which is currently filming in **New Orleans.**

"Unhinged" centers on a woman named Rachel (Pistorius), who leans on her horn at the wrong time, with the wrong driver (Crowe). According to the logline, "'Road rage' doesn't begin to describe what he's about to do to her and everyone she knows."

Simpson is best known for his work on "House of Cards" and "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia", as well as for his Emmy Award nominated turn on "Westworld". He is currently starring opposite **Sir Ben Kingsley** and **Jacki Weaver** in "Perpetual Grace, LTD" and recently finished production on **Tate Taylor's** "Breaking News in Yuba County" alongside **Allison Janney, Regina Hall, and Mila Kunis.** (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Javier Bardem is in talks to play King Triton in Disney's live-action remake of "The Little Mermaid".

Halle Bailey will portray Ariel, a mermaid princess who dreams of being a human, while **Melissa McCarthy** is playing her evil aunt Ursula. **Harry Styles** is also in early talks to play Prince Eric.

"The Little Mermaid" will be directed by **Rob Marshall** and written by **David Magee.** The upcoming film will incorporate original songs from the 1989 animated classic, as well as new tunes from original composer **Alan Menken** with lyrics by "Hamilton" creator **Lin-Manuel Miranda.** Miranda is also producing the film along with **Marshall, Marc Platt** and **John DeLuca.** **Jessica Virtue** and **Allison Erikhman** are overseeing for the studio.

When "The Little Mermaid" first hit theaters almost 30 years ago, it became a huge hit and was credited with sparking a

Disney renaissance. The story, about a mermaid who falls in love with a human named Eric, introduced audiences to classic tunes like "Under the Sea", "Part of Your World" and "Kiss the Girl". (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Ryan Simpkins has joined Fox-Disney's



Simpson



Bardem

second installment of 20th Century Fox and Chernin Entertainment's "Fear Street" trilogy, based on the novels by **R.L. Stine.**

Leigh Janiak is helming all three films.

Previously announced cast includes **Gillian Jacobs, Sadie Sink, Emily Rudd, McCabe Slye, Kiana Madeira, Olivia**

Welch, Benjamin Flores Jr., Ashley Zukerman, Fred Hechinger, Julia Rehwald and Jeremy Ford.

First released in 1989, the Fear Street book series was set in the fictionalized city of Shadyside and revolved around teenagers who faced malevolent and sometimes paranormal opponents. The books were

widely popular, with over 80 million copies sold.

It is unknown who Simpkins will be playing in the pic.

Chernin Entertainment is producing.

Simpkins' most recent feature "Ladyworld" recently premiered at Fantastic Fest and has been playing festivals in the US and abroad. (RTRS)