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## Chaffetz says: see *Rent*, clap, and moo

By [Simon Chaffetz](#) 10 November 2010 [One Comment](#)

*Without you, the ground thaws, the rain falls, the grass grows.*

*Without you, the seeds root, the flowers bloom, the children play.*

*The stars gleam, the poets dream, the eagles fly, without you.*

*The earth turns, the sun burns, but I die, without you.*

How do you give an audience their money's worth when you're producing a musical with lyrics that are this corny and that they've heard a thousand times before? The solution the Dramat found for *Rent* was to put on a rock show that the audience can lose itself in. The production values are high, and they're put to good use. The special effects, unexpected in a student production, work marvels. They contribute to a few of the show's truly magical moments, scenes that blow you away with the amount of energy discharging onstage. The spectator witnesses the energy happening offstage as well: the two are stylishly blurred into one big rock show, with a live band playing above the stage and stagehands handing props to characters while actors move the set around in the middle of a scene. For one night, you'll get to pretend your classmates are rock stars, complete with microphones in their hands. There's a special semi-ironic kick you get from worshipping a person on stage when you know them personally. Every now and then, you'll hear a screech of feedback from the mics, a realistic effect giving rock edge to a glittery musical.

By confusing what's going on offstage and onstage, the show turns into a cabaret where make-believe is eclipsed by a series of raw performances. The director, Mike Donahue YSD '08, is determined to get you into the musical by means of flashing lights, crowded stages and actors dancing in the aisle. Even the most cynical among us will be clapping their hands and mooing along by the end.

All the pleasure is enhanced by the liberation we see the actors go through. It is a beautiful thing to see Yalies let out their inner drag queen—quite an exceptional experience of its own really. Some Yalies as it turns out make very accomplished drag queens. Sam Tsui will convince you as he gracefully walks down the edge of a couch in high heels. The character Maureen is pretty histrionic to begin with, so try to imagine what happens when Sara Rosen plays her even larger than life. Her acting is a merry-go-round of dominatrix clichés that'll take you on a trip appropriate for a 1920s German sexologist's wildest fantasies. Regardless whether you've seen the musical before, you will get into it. The lights, the band, the singing; all pull you onto the stage next to those junkies and strippers you go to college with. And it just so happens that the subject matter—AIDS in the Lower East Side during early nineties—isn't indifferent either. Maybe someday you'll actually have famous friends. For one night, you can pretend you're already there.