

Broadway album teaches history lesson with hip-hop

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Composer, lyricist, book writer and actor Lin-Manuel Miranda has managed to do the seemingly impossible -- make a Hip-Hop and rap-inspired Broadway musical that tells the life, accomplishments and death of Founding Father Alexander Hamilton with the help of characters George Washington, Angelica Schuyler, Eliza Hamilton and historical villain, Aaron Burr, who narrates the show.

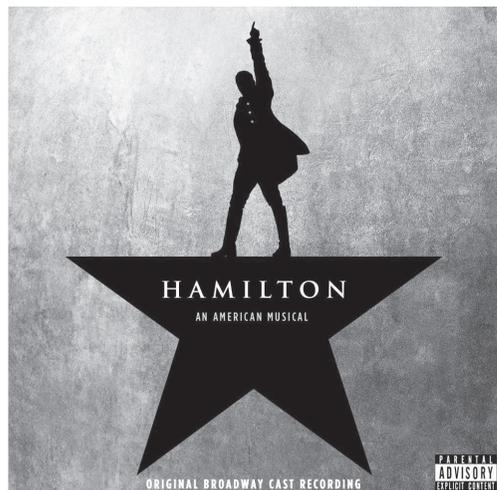
The stellar cast of *Hamilton* includes Miranda as Alexander Hamilton, Leslie Odom, Jr. as Aaron Burr and Renée Elise Goldsberry as Angelica Schuyler.

The album features songs that not only include rap, such as "Cabinet Battle #1" and "Farmer Refuted," but songs that have more of a classical musical-theatre style, such as "Burn." The musical *Hamilton* is almost completely sung through, with very little spoken dialogue that is not part of a

mid-song rap section. While the album was recorded in a recording studio, it sounds like a live performance of the show was recorded and released as the cast album.

Every song on the 46-track cast album is incredible, but some of the standouts are "My Shot," "Satisfied," "Non-Stop," "The Room Where It Happens," "Burn" and "Your Obedient Servant."

"The Room Where It Happened" tells the story of what occurred after the Compromise of 1790. The compromise took place over a private dinner between Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. Rather than the song's being sung primarily by the Hamilton, Madison and Jefferson characters, the only men who were actually at the private dinner where the compromise occurred, it is instead primarily sung by Aaron Burr. Burr sings about how, except for the three other men, no one really knows how decisions were made in the private dinner. He is jealous of the clout Hamilton has, and he



The cast album is \$19.99 on iTunes.

wishes that it were he, rather than Hamilton, who was in "The Room Where It Happens."

"Non-Stop" is the phenomenal Act I finale. The song relays over two years of history, from the time Hamilton is chosen to be a delegate at the Constitutional Convention, to Hamilton's writing 51 of the 85 essays that make up *The Federalist Papers*, to Hamilton's accepting the position of Secretary of the Treasury, all in just over six minutes. Burr is amazed that Hamilton works "non-stop"

and wonders how Hamilton is able to "write like he's running out of time."

Odom, Jr.'s stunning tenor voice, paired with Miranda's fast-paced lyrics, along with the harmonies sung by the ensemble, makes this song stand out among the others. The fact that Miranda is able to write a song that covers over two

years of information is a feat in and of itself, but coupled with the fact that the listener is able to process the storyline of the song, too, his accomplishment is amazing.

The song "Satisfied," performed by Goldsberry, is about Alexander and Eliza Hamilton's wedding reception, as well as Angelica Schuyler's flashback to the night Eliza and Hamilton met. While Angelica was immediately attracted to Hamilton, when she saw that

her sister Eliza was attracted to him, too, Angelica set her own feelings for Hamilton aside so that her sister could be happy. Angelica wonders if she would have married Hamilton had she acted differently that night. Goldsberry's vibrato and unique riffs make this song a favorite on the cast album.

Another standout of the album is "Burn." Sung by Phillipa Soo as Eliza Hamilton, the ballad is one of the only solos of the entire show, and it is the only song that does not have a rap or Hip-Hop tone. Eliza has learned of her husband's affair, as well as that he publicly admitted to it in *The Reynolds Pamphlet*. In this song, Eliza reveals all of the emotions she has kept bottled up inside of herself for so many years. Soo's ability to convey a variety of emotions in a single song is outstanding.

Overall, the *Hamilton* cast album does not disappoint. It manages to weave rap, Hip-Hop, R&B and classic and modern Broadway styles together to form an impeccable and unique sound.