

Stage



Jeremy Jordan and Ben Fankhauser surrounded by other newsies; (inset) Christian Bale in the 1992 film

ONE NEWSIE'S STAR-STUDDED SIDE PROJECT



Every aspiring actor has an audition horror story, and for two years Andrew Keenan-Bolger (*Newsies*' Crutchie, above) has been turning them into comedy with his Web series *Submissions Only*. "At least 50 percent of *Submissions Only* has happened," says Keenan-Bolger, 26, who co-created the show with fellow actor Kate Wetherhead. The sitcom, about a jaded NYC stage actress and her casting-agent BFF, depicts the worst tryouts ever—e.g., a woman's water breaking as she hits a high note—and features big guest stars like Kristin Chenoweth, Michael Urie, and Kristen Johnston. Says Keenan-Bolger, "Look at us as *Smash*'s indie stepchild." —Aubry D'Arminio

Newsies

BROADWAY

By Thom Geier

STOP THE PRESSES! Disney has produced a winning, high-energy musical for family audiences that doesn't include a single flying witch, talking animal, or dancing teacup. Even more surprising, the studio has polished this hardscrabble gem from a notorious big-screen dud, *Newsies*. That 1992 flop, about turn-of-the-20th-century New York City paperboys leading a strike against media barons like Joseph Pulitzer, featured some lovely tunes by Oscar-winning composer Alan Menken (*Beauty and the Beast*) and an awkward but endearing performance by a teenage Christian Bale.

Assuming Bale's role as head newsie Jack Kelly on Broadway, Jeremy Jordan (survivor of the recent *Bonnie & Clyde*) proves he doesn't need anyone wandering into his sight lines to be an explosive presence on stage. Blessed

with a crystalline voice, Jordan conveys a rare combination of masculine swagger and vulnerability. He gets a worthy foil and love interest in aspiring reporter Katherine (charming newcomer Kara Lindsay), one of several smart additions to the film's story by playwright Harvey Fierstein. She also lands one of Menken and lyricist Jack Feldman's best new songs, the delightful double-talking "Watch What Happens."

Despite the updates to the score, the standouts remain ensemble numbers from the film, such as "Carrying the Banner" and "King of New York"—the latter is a tap-tastic showstopper that opens the second act—and they pop thanks to Christopher Gattelli's aggressively acrobatic choreography and a high-flying male chorus who will likely drive future *So You Think You Can Dance* contestants to belly up to the barre. As you might expect, these cap-wearing, backflipping urchins manage to upstage all the adults on stage (who are, admittedly, more sketchily written). Like *Oliver!* and *Annie* before it, *Newsies* delivers the news that on Broadway, orphans can be irresistible. (Tickets: Ticketmaster.com) **A-**



Kristin Chenoweth and Michael Urie