

November 26 - December 10, 2009

## Broadway Cranks It Up With New Crop of Rock Musicals

**Behind the scenes:**  
Shows from U2, Green Day and others  
By Nicole Frehsée

**M**USICAL THEATER has to grow with the times," says Michael Mayer, who wrote and directed *American Idiot*, the rock opera based on Green Day's 2004 album. "It has to reflect the tastes of a gener-

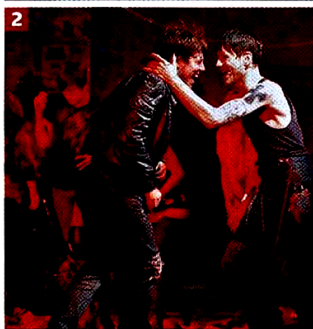
### ON THE STAGE

ation that didn't grow up on *South Pacific*." Along with the U2-scored *Spider-Man*, *Idiot* is part of a new wave of rock musicals coming to Broadway. Bringing pop culture to the big stage is a smart move, especially when hit musicals are scarce. "Producers want a sure thing," says Bill T. Jones, director and choreographer of *Fela!*, about Nigerian Afrobeat pioneer and political activist Fela Kuti. "They're tapping into entertainment that the masses understand."

### Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark

**Composers:** Bono, the Edge  
Opening: February 25th

The most expensive musical in Broadway history may not even make it to the stage. *Spider-Man* – which boasts a score by Bono and the Edge and big showbiz names like *Lion King* director Julie Taymor and stars Evan Rachel Wood (as Mary Jane Watson) and Alan Cumming (as the Green Goblin) – has ballooned into a \$52 million project that's reportedly struggling to make its planned premiere. Blame fancy Hollywood-style effects: Actors swing over the crowd and land in the balcony of New York's Hilton Theatre, which is being renovated for the show. (The musical is also troubled by weak advance ticket sales and a shortage of investors.) "I can only assume it's some sort of administrative hiccup," the Edge told *ROLLING STONE*. "It's in very good shape."



### Broadway-Bound

(1) *Million Dollar Quartet* features tunes by Lewis, Perkins, Presley and Cash (from left). (2) The stars of Green Day's *American Idiot*. (3) Bono and the Edge scored *Spider-Man*.

### Fela!

**Composer:** Fela Kuti  
Now on Broadway

Afropop icon Fela Kuti isn't a household name, but Jay-Z and Will Smith, who signed on as producers of *Fela!*, want to change that. This high-energy spectacle – which drew raves during its 2008 off-Broadway run – centers on the life of Kuti, who had 27 wives, lived in a compound and was jailed frequently for his political views. "He was a remarkable character," says Jones. "He had a person who did nothing more than provide him with joints."

### American Idiot

**Composer:** Green Day  
Opening: TBD

After setting box-office records in Berkeley, California, the critically acclaimed adaptation of the Green Day album is eyeing a 2010 Broadway run. The show – about disillusioned teens in post-9/11 America – is packed with music: all 13 *Idiot* cuts, plus B sides and four tracks from the

group's 2009 LP *21st Century Breakdown*. "There's not a lot of cheesy dialogue," says Billie Joe Armstrong, who co-wrote the script. "It's about making the songs shine."

### Million Dollar Quartet

**Composers:** Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley  
Opening: April

In December 1956, Presley, Cash, Lewis and Perkins met at Memphis' Sun Records for a legendary jam. That session is re-created in this well-reviewed jukebox musical, in which a virtuosic cast – capturing the essence of the rock greats – performs classics like "Blue Suede Shoes," "Folsom Prison Blues" and "Great Balls of Fire."