

## Blu-Ray Review: Dakota Fanning, Kristen Stewart Make ‘The Runaways’ Worthwhile

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on July 28, 2010 - 10:14am

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CHICAGO – There’s a great moment early on in “The Runaways” where fifteen-year-old Cherie Currie lip-syncs to Davie Bowie’s “Lady Grinning Soul” at a high school talent show. Her hardened baby face defiantly stares into the crowd, as her peers accompany the performance with catcalls. Yet instead of dissolving into a puddle of girlish tears, Currie flips off the surrounding student body. She clearly doesn’t give a d—n about her bad reputation.

It’s this spirit of raucous conviction that provides the fuel behind first-time feature director Floria Sigismondi’s biopic on the titular all-girl rock band that ultimately launched the career of Joan Jett. The film centers on two transformative performances from “Twilight” co-stars Kristen Stewart (as Jett, the group’s founding member and rhythm guitarist) and Dakota Fanning (as lead singer Currie), who share a palpable onscreen chemistry even as the film fails to adequately develop their relationship. Since Sigismondi based her script off Currie’s biography, the story is largely slanted in Fanning’s direction, despite Stewart’s top billing.



Blu-Ray Rating: **3.5/5.0**

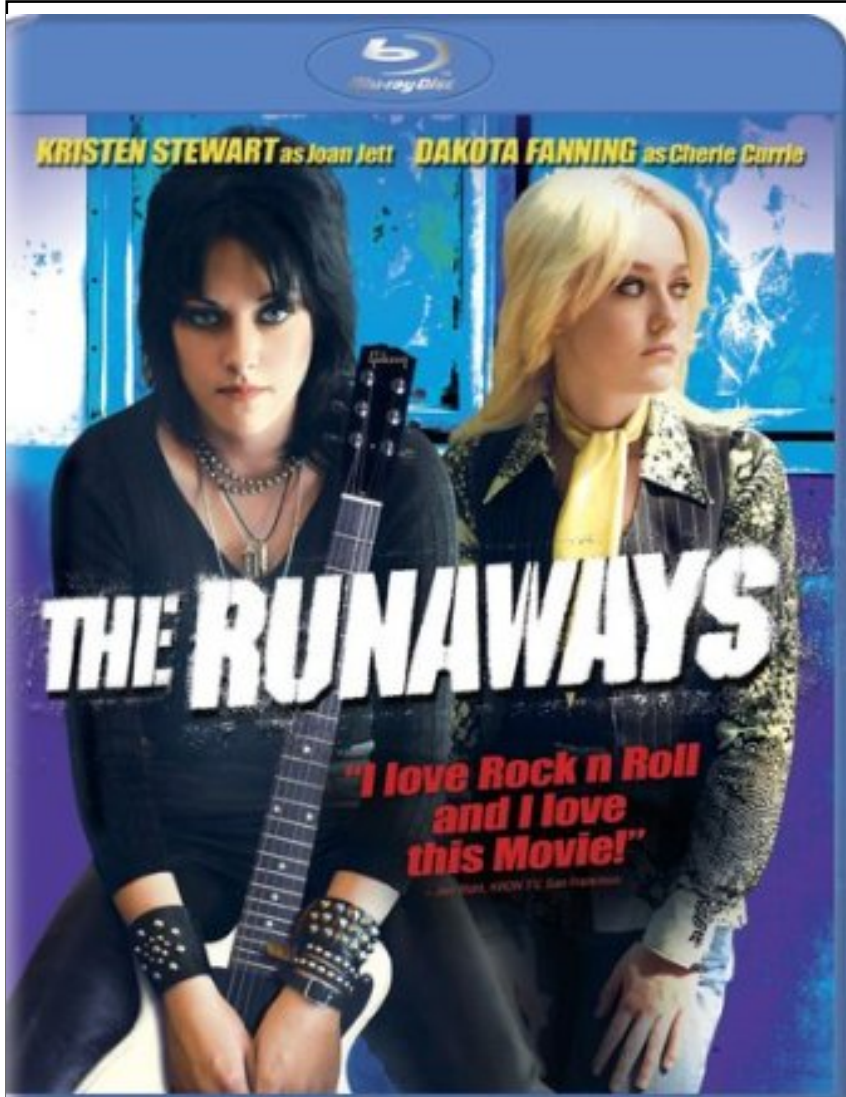
It’s initially startling to see Fanning without her trademark toothy grin and Stewart devoid of the labored breathing and submissive devotion she sports all too easily as Stephenie Meyer’s tiresome heroine. It’s a joy to watch these young actresses blossom in roles so far removed from the characters they have become known for. After a couple stumbles into more “mature” roles, Fanning truly comes into her own as Currie, nailing the precocious singer’s pent-up rage, budding sexuality and ferocious onstage presence. Her performance of the group’s hit song, “Cherry Bomb” is so fierce and dazzling that it’s nearly impossible to believe that this same young woman was headlining “Charlotte’s Web” just four years ago. Stewart is equally powerful as Jett, effortlessly embodying the swagger and energy of the male bands she intends to upstage. Jett is well aware of the band’s marketable position, precariously balanced between empowerment and exploitation, and she becomes especially troubled when her freewheeling manager, Kim Fowley (Michael Shannon), attempts to turn Currie into a punk rock Lolita.



Kristen Stewart, Dakota Fanning and Alia Shawkat star in Floria Sigismondi’s The Runaways.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Shannon's performance, however, provides a key to the film's shortcomings. He's a wonderful talent, but once he gets into his scenery-chewing mode (a la "Revolutionary Road"), he ends up devouring his co-stars in the process. Sigismondi refuses to reign in Shannon, thus allowing him to be a glaring, yet admittedly entertaining, distraction anytime he barges into a scene. None of the other girls in the band are allowed half as much screen time, wasting the talents of a terrific ensemble (the lovely Alia Shawkat barely utters a line). A bigger problem with the film is the screenplay, which simplifies Currie's coming-of-age story into a series of easily digestible vignettes. The dialogue occasionally sounds like it's coming from the mind of a witty autobiographer, rather than the mouths of teenagers, such as when Currie accuses her mom of kicking out her father "for leaving water rings on the furniture." Yet Sigismondi's experience in music videos lends the film a kinetic, often delirious visual style that mirrors the drug-induced, hormonal psyches of its characters, while making intriguing use of the color red.



The Runaways was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on July 20th, 2010.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

"The Runaways" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), and includes Sony's portable BD-Live feature, movieIQ sync, which allows viewers to construct an interactive playlist of their favorite songs in the film. The real Currie shows up in two brief making-of featurettes, where she reminisces about working with Fowley, who's described as a "ranting beat poet." The stars reveal that they had a mere two weeks of rehearsal to perfect their singing and guitar playing skills. Sigismondi says that she saw herself in the characters and wanted to make a film about young girls in Hollywood. Though Jett is seen onset with Stewart, her face is not among the talking heads.

However, it is Currie who is conspicuously absent from the film's audio commentary, which accompanies Stewart and Fanning with the incomparable Jett, who offers a fascinating glimpse into her songwriting process, while correcting some fictionalized portions of the film. Though she understands that cocaine is a more "visual drug" for her character to use, she insists, "We were Quaalude people." Jett remembers that she did in fact visit Currie in the hospital (as in the film), though it was when her beloved bandmate was getting her tonsils out. Surprisingly, Jett claims that the film depicted the origins of "Cherry Bomb" fairly accurately, and she says that Shannon captured Fowley's "energy and grandiose movement." One of the few insights we get into Jett's family life is when she says that her mother found the formidable Fowley "humorous." The other factor that makes this commentary a rockin' good time is Stewart's endearingly awkward honesty. Her rambling, candid remarks paint a revealing portrait of her insecurity as she questions everything from her hairpiece and line delivery to the film's arty camera angles and cliched, abridged script. "You don't have time to say what you want to say," Stewart says, succinctly summarizing the picture's primary flaw.

*'The Runaways' is released by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment and stars Dakota Fanning, Kristen Stewart, Michael Shannon, Stella Maeve, Scout Taylor-Compton, Alia Shawkat, Riley Keough and Tatum O'Neal. It was written and directed by Floria Sigismondi. It was released on July 20th, 2010. It is rated R.*

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