



(From left) Actors Robin de Jesus, Andrew Garfield, Alexandra Shipp, Vanessa Hudgens and director Lin-Manuel Miranda attend the world premiere of "Tick, Tick... Boom!" on the opening night of AFI Fest at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles.

Lin-Manuel Miranda debuts 'tick, tick... Boom!' and eyes new projects

Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator of Broadway sensation "Hamilton," said Wednesday he had returned to his first love of cinema with his directorial debut "tick tick... Boom!"—but is itching to write musical theater again. The movie, which had its world premiere at AFI Fest in Los Angeles, pays tribute to Jonathan Larson, the writer of "Rent" who was Broadway's wunderkind a generation before Miranda. "Film was my first love. I fell in love with movies, my grandfather owned a VHS video store when I was a kid—Miranda Video," Miranda told AFP. "I spent my summers watching everything—very little of it appropriate to a child of seven or eight years of age, but I watched it all!

"And so I feel like I've come all the way back around to my first love." Miranda's "tick tick... Boom!" is an adaptation of Larson's stripped-down musical of the same name, which recounted his struggles to create art

and his fear of growing old without success.

Larson died aged just 35, never getting to see and enjoy the huge popularity, plethora of Tony Awards and Pulitzer Prize for drama that "Rent" would garner. "It's the only movie I ever actually daydreamed about [making] as a movie before I even got the opportunity to direct," said Miranda, who saw Larson's musical while still at university.

"It was the month after the terrorist attacks of September 11, when everyone was questioning, like, 'what am I even doing with my life?' 'And the entire musical is about 'what are you even doing with your life?' 'It felt like a personal attack and a call to action.'" The film cuts between Larson—played by Andrew Garfield—performing the original rock monologue of "tick tick... Boom!" on stage in New York, and flashbacks to the life events that inspired it.

"I brought the music I loved—hip hop music

and Latin music—into my work the same way Jonathan took rock music into his," said Miranda. "Sort of just advancing his thesis, I feel like a student of his." "It's worked out pretty well!"

'Itching to write'

While "tick tick... Boom!" is Miranda's first feature film as director, he has been in growing demand in Hollywood since the colossal success of "Hamilton." Disney bought the streaming rights to a taped stage production of "Hamilton"—which tells the story of the United States' founding fathers via hip-hop—for \$75 million. Miranda also produced a film version of his first musical, "In The Heights," and wrote the songs for Disney's forthcoming Colombia-set magical realist fantasy "Encanto."

Former "The Amazing Spider-Man" star Garfield told AFP that Miranda had "set up an atmosphere of community that you only really get in theater, that you don't often find in film." Co-star and "Hamilton" alumnus Joshua Henry joked that while navigating his way as director, Miranda sometimes "would say cut when he meant action and vice versa." "But seeing him come into his own was a really inspiring thing." While delays due to the pandemic closing theaters for months have caused the releases of Miranda's various big-screen efforts to coincide, he told AFP he is back "seeing as much theater as I can" on Broadway. "And I'm itching to write again too, once I'm on the other side of all of these movies that are all coming out the same week because of the pandemic. "I'm excited to clear my desk." AFI Fest runs until Sunday. — AFP



US director Lin-Manuel Miranda attends the world premiere of "Tick, Tick... Boom!" on the opening night of AFI Fest at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles. — AFP photos

Disney+ streaming subscriber growth slows

US entertainment giant Disney said Wednesday its flagship streaming service grew slower than expected in the recently ended quarter as pandemic headwinds have begun to bite. Disney+ has reached 118 million subscribers worldwide, but analysts had predicted millions more would sign up, resulting in a miss that saw the entertainment giant's share price slip in after-market trades. Disney Company chief executive Bob Chapek told analysts on an earnings call that the two-year-old service has faced some pandemic headwinds to landing new shows and films. "Obviously, we are only in year two of the Disney+ launch and the hunger for content for the service is extraordinary," he said.

"And when you have that happen at the same time that you have a pandemic and you have to shut down production, that is not a good combination," he added. Rival Netflix has promised to significantly bolster its line-up of original programming after suffering from pandemic-caused production delays. Disappointing growth at Disney+ came as the company tried to regain momentum in its travel and theme park businesses, which have suffered due to the pandemic. "We've made great strides in reopening our businesses while taking meaningful and innovative steps in Direct-to-Consumer and at our Parks, particularly with our popular new Disney Genie and Magic Key offerings," Chapek said.



Impacts on parks and films

Disney also planned a major promotion on Friday to mark the two-year anniversary this week of the launch of Disney+. More worrisome for investors, the average monthly revenue per Disney+ subscriber fell 9 percent year-over-year to \$4.12. In its earnings release, the group attributed the decline to cheaper subscriptions in some markets, such as India and Indonesia. It also noted that Disney+ is facing cost increases in terms of content production, marketing and technology. Disney stock fell four percent by close of trading Wednesday. But the very popular streaming service benefits from the controversial strategy of its parent company, which consists of releasing some films simultaneously in theaters and online, with an additional cost for subscribers to the platform. After "Mulan" in 2020, "Black Widow" and "Jungle Cruise" were released this summer to the great displeasure of theaters and stars such as Scarlett Johansson, who criticized a loss of earnings for them. — AFP