

McCarter

For Immediate Release

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“Damn the man – save the Empire!”

McCarter Announces World Premiere of EMPIRE RECORDS A New Musical Comedy

The '90s cult-classic film takes the stage
September 6 - October 6, 2024

PRINCETON, NJ – Artistic Director **Sarah Rasmussen** and Executive Director **Martin Miller** today announced that McCarter will stage the world premiere of *Empire Records*, a new musical comedy based on the beloved 1990s cult-classic film. The adaptation features an original rock score by Jonathan Larson Grant winner and Princeton native **Zoe Sarnak**, with a book penned by the film’s screenwriter, **Carol Heikkinen**. Directed by **Trip Cullman** (Broadway: *Choir Boy*, *Lobby Hero*) with choreography by **Ellenore Scott** (Broadway: *Funny Girl*), this high-energy musical adaptation is set to capture the hearts of audiences with dynamic and defiant characters, throwback nostalgia, and an electrifying soundtrack. *Empire Records* is produced by special arrangement with **Bill Weiner**, **Hunter Arnold**, and **Cody Lassen**.

Date: September 6 - October 6, 2024

Location: Berlind Theatre at McCarter Theatre Center, 91 University Place, Princeton, NJ

Overflowing with optimism, '90s counterculture, rooftop dancing, and the spirit of punk rock, *Empire Records* tells the story of a band of idealist misfits fighting to save their beloved record store from a corporate takeover. With tactics ranging from desperate to dangerous, the team comes together during a visit by over the hill pop star Rex Manning to discover the true value of friendship, love, and music—all in one extraordinary, unforgettable day.

“From *Our Town* to *Anna in the Tropics* to *Vanya*, *Sonya*, *Masha and Spike*, McCarter has a legacy of premiering bold, new work on our stages that go on to have vibrant lives on Broadway and beyond. *Empire Records* is set to be another landmark event in McCarter’s storied history,” said Rasmussen. “In the intimate Berlind Theatre—and with a limited run—it’s the unmissable live performance event of the fall.”

Added Miller, “*Empire Records* bridges generations, from the vinyl enthusiasts of Gen X to the streaming aficionados of Gen Z, and reminds us of a time when record stores were not just retail spaces, but vibrant hubs for discovering music and forging friendships. It’s a tribute to an era before playlists, when every record was a story waiting to be heard.”

Ticket and subscription on-sale dates, as well as the remaining titles for McCarter's 2024-2025 Theatre Series, will be announced at a later date.

The film *Empire Records* was released in 1995 by New Regency Productions. As *The Guardian* wrote on the 25th anniversary of the film's release: "What's not to love? A cultural touchstone, an homage to an era—unselfconsciously optimistic and principled—*Empire Records* is ripe for a comeback."

About McCarter

The McCarter is one of the country's flagship theatres and a vibrant center for community and for the performing arts. Located on the campus of Princeton University, the company is an independent nonprofit, serving as a nationally renowned, multi-disciplinary creative hub of arts and ideas, offering theatre, music, dance, spoken word, and educational programs for all ages. A two-time Tony Award winner, McCarter's legacy of artistic excellence traces back to the theatre's first performances in 1930. Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, Kaufmann & Hart's *You Can't Take It with You*, and William Inge's *Bus Stop* all had their premieres on the McCarter stage, paving the way for a long history of collaborations with playwrights to launch remarkable works that have gone on to tens of thousands of performances reaching millions of audience members around the world. The company is equally revered for presenting global artists on its stages, including Alvin Ailey, Yo-Yo Ma, Samara Joy, Hasan Minhaj, Jon Stewart, Caetano Veloso, Rhiannon Giddens, Patti Smith, Esperanza Spalding, Lake Street Dive, and Herbie Hancock, among many others. Of the 100,000 community members who directly participate in the company's work every year, more than 5,000 are students taking part in McCarter's robust educational offerings in Princeton, Trenton, and in schools throughout the region. McCarter leads with values of "justice and joy, and beauty in belonging," creating stories and experiences that enliven minds, expand imaginations, and engage communities.

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