

Leaving its dignity behind, Lounge tests how much fun Grease karaoke is. When performed alone...

Grease. You either love it, loathe it or sort of enjoy it, but prefer not to admit so much. So, when *Grease: The Ultimate Sing-Along Special Edition* finger-snapped its way through the postbox, opinion among *Lounge's* flatmates was divided. "I'll get out me leather jacket," grinned one. "I'm going out," announced another. "Those suuu-mmmrrrrr niiiinnnnights!" screamed the third.

In the interest of High School nostalgia, not to mention the promise of a crate of generic imported lager, *Lounge* suggested a bonding hour playing the edition's main selling point — the titular sing-while-you're-watching extra. But, as the bonus menu spun up and the Rydell High Sing-Along feature swam into focus, the true kitsch force of *Grease* took hold, leaving *Lounge* alone. With a hairbrush for a mic.

A little lonely, very cynical and eager to get in the mood, it was time to get an early showstopper out of the way. Play 'Summer Nights' – just over three minutes of sheer cheese rendered oddly enjoyable by a can and a half of Mungerbrau [or whatever], causing *Lounge* to double over in paroxysms of helpless mirth at the violently incompetent rendition spewing from the lips. Through tears of shame, agony and flushing adrenaline, we manage to make out the lyrics: illuminated in time with Travolta et al's furious wiggling.

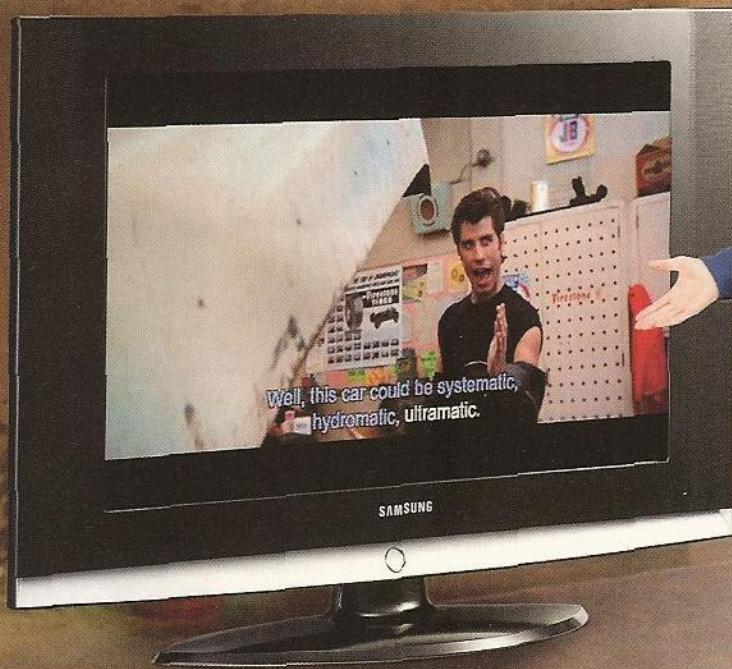
When it's finally over – loud, hideously atonal “Walla walla”-ing continuing for some minutes

after the menu screen returns — a brief moment of clarity descends. Time stands still, the frosty silence broken only by *Lounge*'s pitiful attempts to quell our humiliated panting. Shoes are inspected closely. Onwards! A swift clear of the throat and a full-on volley of appallingly earnest classics follow in relentless succession...

There's 'Look At Me, I'm Sandra Dee', with the joyously inappropriate opening couplet "Look at me/I'm Sandra Dee/lousy with virginity." Then, during 'Greased Lightnin', *Lounge* is saddled with the frankly implausible task of singing, without a hint of irony, that "the girls'll cream" and "she's a real pussy wagon". Our 1994 Nissan Micra, propped up awaiting a new fanbelt, presumably flushes an even queasier shade of yellow beneath its saffron tarpaulin.

Ninety minutes later, the flatmates have returned to relieve the lonely reveller – just in time for the glorious closing medley of 'Hopelessly Devoted To You/You're The One That I Want'. Camp, tuneless and depressingly school disco, *Lounge's* lonesome *Grease* revival was a peculiar event. But, as the final ditty soars, arms linked with buddies and memories of sweaty dances with first loves, sneaky snogs behind the lockers and cigarettes behind the bikeshed come flooding back... We got chills, they're multiplayin'. And we've definitely lost control.

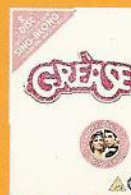
Mark Powell



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Film ★★★★★ **Extras** ★★★★★



This is a grade-A improvement on *Grease's* original 2002 DVD release, padded out with proper extras including the titular sing-along feature. Anyone who's ever stumbled into a karaoke bar, willingly or not, probably has the lyrics to 'Summer Nights' and

'You're The One That I Want' committed to memory, but now you can also pipe along to the smutty word-blur of 'Greased Lightning' ('You know that ain't no shit/We'll be getting lots of tit/In Greased Lightning') and the peculiar '50s nostalgia of 'We Go Together' ('We're one of a kind/Like dip da-dip da-dip doo wop da doo bee doo', etc.).

It's the campy, catchy tunes and inventively choreographed musical numbers that make *Grease* as fresh and fun today as it was in 1978. But top marks also go to the energetic cast, who jump through the hoops of a clichéd high school plot with swagger, vibrancy and plenty of laughs. And it's not only a showcase for John Travolta's sexual swagger, Olivia Newton-John's honey-voiced innocence and Stockard Channing's bitch-tastic sarcasm – every cast member steals their memorable moment or few.

A couple of the new featurettes are strictly filler (want a duck-tail hairstyle to match Grease's barnets? A camp LA hairdresser shows you how), while an interview with the baby-faced Travolta at the original premiere is tantalising but brief. But *Grease*-maniacs will be too busy being living-room superstars to notice.

Matt Mueller

EXTRAS

► **Director commentary**

► Five Making Of featurettes

Deleted scenes