

# The Commitments (1991)



Theatrical release poster (Wikipedia)

## TOMATOMETER

### All critics

88%

Average Rating: 7.5/10  
Reviews Counted: 42  
Fresh: 37  
Rotten: 5

### Top critics

73%

Average Rating: 6.4/10  
Reviews Counted: 11  
Fresh: 8  
Rotten: 3

Critics Consensus: No consensus yet.

## AUDIENCE SCORE

90%

liked it  
Average Rating: 3.7/5  
User Ratings: 28,143

## Movie Info

"The Irish are the blacks of Europe, Dubliners are the blacks of Ireland, and the North Siders are the blacks of Dublin ... so say it loud -- I'm black and I'm proud!" Or so Jimmy Rabbitte (Robert Arkins) tells his slightly puzzled friends as he tries to assemble a rhythm & blues show band in a working class community in Dublin in Alan Parker's film *The Commitments*. Jimmy is a would-be music business wheeler and dealer, and he's decided what Dublin needs is a top-shelf soul band. However, top-shelf soul musicians are hard to find in Dublin, so he has to make do with what he can find. However, after a long round of auditions, Jimmy makes two inspired discoveries: Deco (Andrew Strong), an abrasive and alcoholic streetcar conductor who nevertheless has a voice like the risen ghost of Otis Redding, and Joey "The Lips" Fagan (Johnny Murphy), a horn player who knows soul music backwards and forwards and claims to have played with everyone from Wilson Pickett to Elvis Presley. Before long, the band -- called the Commitments -- is packing them in at local clubs. But do they have what it takes to make the big time? Based on the novel by Roddy Doyle, who also co-wrote the screenplay, *The Commitments* is sparked by fine performances by its young cast and enthusiastic performances of a number of '60s soul classics; the cast, who play their own instruments, reassembled the band for a concert tour after the film became a hit.

Rating: R (for language)  
Genre: Comedy , Drama , Musical & Performing Arts  
Directed By: Alan Parker  
Written By: Roddy Doyle , Dick Clement , Ian La Frenais  
In Theaters: Aug 13, 1991 wide  
On DVD: Nov 1, 1999  
Runtime: 116 minutes  
Studio: 20th Century Fox Film Corporation

[[www.rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com)]

# ***The Commitments* (film)**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

***The Commitments*** is a 1991 Irish-British-American musical comedy-drama film directed by Alan Parker, and adapted from Roddy Doyle's 1987 novel of the same name, the first book in his *Barrytown Trilogy*. Set in the Northside of Dublin, Ireland, the story follows Jimmy Rabbitte (Robert Arkins), a young music fanatic who assembles a group of working-class youths to form a soul music band known as "The Commitments".

Following publication of the novel in 1987, producers Lynda Myles and Roger Randall-Cutler purchased the film rights, and commissioned Doyle to write a film adaptation. Doyle spent one year working on the script before Myles brought in veteran screenwriters Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais to help complete the script. Clement and La Frenais discussed the project with Parker, who agreed to direct the film after reading the novel. In 1989, the project was taken to a newly established film company, Beacon Communications, which provided an estimated budget of US\$12 million. The film's principal photography commenced in late August 1990 and concluded after 53 days; filming took place on location in Dublin. The cast members appearing as *The Commitments* were mostly unknown actors before filming, and were chosen for their musical talents, as well as their resemblance to the characters in Doyle's novel.

Upon release, *The Commitments* opened to generally positive reviews and grossed \$14.9 million during its North American theatrical run. The film received an Academy Award nomination for Best Film Editing, and won four BAFTA Awards, including Best Film and Best Direction. While only a modest success with North American audiences, *The Commitments* has since become a cult film. It was followed by two unrelated films based on the second and third *Barrytown* novels—*The Snapper* (1993) and *The Van* (1996)—that were both written by Doyle and directed by Stephen Frears.

## **Plot**

In the Northside of Dublin, Ireland, Jimmy Rabbitte is a young music fanatic who aspires to manage an Irish soul band in the tradition of

1960s African-American recording artists. He places an advert in the local newspaper and holds auditions in his parents' home. After being deluged by scores of disastrous performers, Jimmy decides to put together a band consisting of friends and people he encounters—lead singer Deco Cuffe, guitarist Outspan Foster, pianist Steven Clifford, saxophonist Dean Fay, bassist Derek Scully, drummer Billy Mooney, and female backup singers Bernie McGloughlin, Natalie Murphy and Imelda Quirke. Jimmy then meets Joey "The Lips" Fagan, a veteran musician who offers his services, and has unlikely stories about meeting and working with famous musicians. Joey names the band "The Commitments".

After purchasing a drum set, and acquiring a piano from Joey's mother, Jimmy secures the remainder of the band's musical equipment from Duffy, a black market dealer. The band rehearses on the second floor above a pool hall, and after much practice, they convince a local church community centre to give them a gig, under the pretence of it being an anti-heroin campaign. Jimmy then hires Mickah Wallace, a hot-tempered bouncer, to act as the band's security. The band draws a good crowd, but after Deco inadvertently hits Derek with his microphone stand, the amplifiers explode, resulting in a power outage.

Tensions run high among the band members, as Joey begins seducing Imelda, Natalie and Bernie, and Deco grows increasingly obnoxious and unruly. The band performs at another venue where, at the end of one song, Billy accidentally knocks over his hi-hat cymbals, leading to a heated argument between him and Deco. Billy leaves the band, much to Jimmy's frustration, and Mickah replaces him as the band's drummer. During their next performance at a roller disco, Jimmy is confronted by Duffy, who demands payment for the equipment he provided the band. Mickah intervenes and violently attacks Duffy, who is escorted out. Jimmy then goes on stage and introduces the band, which elicits boisterous cheers from the audience.

After the band secures another gig, Joey promises Jimmy that his friend, Wilson Pickett, will sing alongside the band during their performance. On this promise, Jimmy convinces several journalists to attend the band's next performance. At the venue, the band draws a large crowd, but its members begin arguing with

each other offstage, and become doubtful when it appears that Pickett will not show. They go back on stage, where Deco denounces Jimmy for misleading the audience about Pickett's appearance. The band's performance of one of Pickett's songs, "In the Midnight Hour", silences the crowd's protests. After the performance, the fighting continues; during a heated argument, Mickah beats up Deco outside the club, and Jimmy storms off in frustration, claiming that the band is finished. Joey follows him, but is berated by Jimmy for misleading him about Pickett. Just as Joey leaves, Pickett's limousine pulls up next to Jimmy, and his driver asks for directions to the club. In a closing monologue, Jimmy explains that the band's members have since gone their separate ways.

## Cast

### The Commitments

- Robert Arkins as Jimmy Rabbitte – manager
- Andrew Strong as Declan "Deco" Cuffe – lead vocals
- Angeline Ball as Imelda Quirke – backing vocals (The Commitmentettes)
- Maria Doyle as Natalie Murphy – backing vocals (The Commitmentettes)
- Bronagh Gallagher as Bernie McGloughlin – backing vocals (The Commitmentettes)
- Johnny Murphy as Joey "The Lips" Fagan – trumpet
- Glen Hansard as "Outspan" Foster – lead guitar
- Kenneth McCluskey as Derek Scully – bass player
- Félim Gormley as Dean Fay – alto saxophone
- Michael Aherne as Steven Clifford – pianist
- Dick Massey as Billy Mooney – drums
- Dave Finnegan as Mickah Wallace – security and drums

### Other characters

- Colm Meaney as Jimmy Rabbitte, Sr., Jimmy's father.
- Anne Kent as Mrs. Rabbitte, Jimmy's mother.
- Andrea Corr as Sharon Rabbitte, Jimmy's younger sister.

- Gerard Cassoni as Darren Rabbitte, Jimmy's young brother.
- Liam Carney as Duffy, a black market dealer.
- Ger Ryan as a pawnbroker
- Sean Hughes as Dave from Eejit Records.
- Phelim Drew as Roddy Craig, a reporter.
- Colm Mac Con Iomaire as an auditioning fiddler.
- Peter Rowen as a shy skateboarding auditioner.
- Paul Bushnell as an "Avante-Garde-A-Clue" band member, and an Eejit Records engineer
- Jim Corr as an "Avant-Garde-A-Clue" band member.
- Alan Parker as a producer for Eejit Records.
- Sharon Corr (uncredited) as a fiddle player in Country & Western band.
- Caroline Corr (uncredited) as a drummer in Country & Western band.

## Production

### Development



Roddy Doyle, who co-wrote the film adaptation of his novel *The Commitments*.

Following the publication of Roddy Doyle's 1987 novel *The Commitments*, producers Roger Randall-Cutler and Lynda Myles purchased the film rights and asked Doyle to write an film adaptation. Doyle spent a year working on the script, which Myles later felt needed the input of a more experienced writer. Myles commissioned

veteran screenwriting team Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais to help complete Doyle's script. "I wanted advice from them on a writer who might do something with the script", she said. "But they said they loved it and wanted to do it themselves."

In 1989, the project was taken on by Beacon Communications Corporation, an independent film company established that year by Tom Rosenberg, a former real estate developer, and Armyan Bernstein, a former television journalist turned screenwriter and producer. Clement and La Frenais traveled to Los Angeles, and discussed the project with their friend, Alan Parker, before lending him a copy of the novel. Parker was intrigued by the novel's dialogue and humor, stating, "The book was all dialogue with very little description, but by the use of this wonderful language, and almost nothing but language, in a few lines [Doyle] was able to make his characters as vivid and strong as a dozen pages of purple Joycian prose." After concluding post-production work on his previous film *Come See the Paradise* (1990), Parker agreed to direct the film; the director turned down an opportunity to helm a planned adaptation of *Les Misérables* in favor of directing *The Commitments*. With a major director now attached to the project, Beacon struck a deal with the producers to finance the film, and Parker was granted creative control.

The film became an international co-production between companies in the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States; Parker's production label Dirty Hands Productions and Randall-Cutler's The First Film Company, both based in England, were enlisted as production companies. Clement and La Frenais later became the film's co-producers. Parker and the producers later attended the 1990 Cannes Film Festival to secure worldwide pre-sales. 20th Century Fox, the studio that financed *Come See the Paradise*, acquired the North American distribution rights.

### **Casting**

The film's casting directors, John Hubbard and his wife Ros Hubbard, travelled to Dublin, Ireland in April 1990, and spent two months visiting local clubs in their search for musicians. In June of that year, Parker travelled to Dublin, where he placed an advertisement in the magazine *Hot Press*, requesting young

artists to audition for roles in the film. The director stated that, in his search for the band members that form The Commitments, he would consider anyone who could sing or play a musical instrument and resembled the characters from the source material. He said, "I would stop kids busking (performing for change) on the streets and call them in to audition. Everyone you bump into in Dublin is in a band, or has a brother or sister who is. In the end we had to choose kids who were quite talented, because they had to play musicians who were awful at first, but gradually improved."

Auditions were first held at The Waterfront, a nightclub located near the River Liffey. Parker said of the location, "The Waterfront nightclub ... was very short of space and so I had to do the readings cramped in a greasy-tiled kitchen behind the bar." In a two-week period, the director listened to 64 local bands at 10-minute intervals. Parker stated the bands played "everything from heavy metal to hip-hop and folk to funk" before every member from each band read lines individually for him. Parker then held an open casting call at the Mansion House on Dawson Street, Dublin, where 1,500 people auditioned for various roles in the film, and were videotaped as they read lines and played various instruments.

During the auditions, Parker met Andrew Strong, the 16-year-old son of the film's vocal coach Rob Strong, who went on stage in the band rehearsal room and performed "Mustang Sally". Parker said of Strong's performance, "His voice was exactly as [Doyle] had described it in the book: '... a real deep growl that scraped against the tongue and throat on the way out' ... I thought that as long as I had that voice, with a little patience and considerable rehearsal we could also turn him into an actor." After meeting with Parker to discuss the project, Strong secured the role of Commitments lead singer Deco Cuffe. Strong reflected, "... I was singing 'Mustang Sally', and the music coordinator told me to stop halfway through and go for a coffee. After a while, he called me back in, and another guy walked up to me and said, 'Hi, I'm Alan Parker, could you read these lines?' I was hired as Deco an hour later."

Parker had trouble casting the main, non-musical part of Jimmy Rabbitte, manager of The Commitments, before Robert Arkins—a musician with no previous acting experience—was cast. Arkins was initially considered for the

role of Deco before the filmmakers discovered Strong. Although the character of Jimmy does not sing in the film, Arkins performs the song "Treat Her Right" during the opening credits. For the role of Joey "the Lips" Fagan, the eldest member of the band, Parker and La Frenais wanted veteran musician Van Morrison. Although his meeting with Parker did not go well, Morrison offered his songs for use in the film. Rory Gallagher was briefly considered before veteran film and stage actor Johnny Murphy secured the role. Although Murphy could not play an instrument, Parker felt that he best captured the essence of both the character and the film. Murphy was the only cast member who did not do his own playing in the film.

Bronagh Gallagher, another established actor, was cast as Bernie McGloughlin, one of three backup singers known as "The Commitmentettes". The actress, born in Derry, Northern Ireland, had to learn a Dublin accent for the role. Angeline Ball, who plays Imelda Quirke, stated that she came to be involved with the project because she was "one of the few who had a private audition through the Hubbards as I was already on the scene singing and dancing". Maria Doyle Kennedy was a member of the Irish quartet band The Black Velvet Band, prior to being cast as Commitmentette singer Natalie Murphy. On securing the role, Doyle Kennedy said, "It was an accident. I didn't go to drama school or anything and I learned on the job. And it's nice to have the chance to pretend to be other people." Michael Aherne, who plays The Commitments' pianist Steven Clifford, was an employee for the Dublin Corporation and took a three-month leave of absence from his job to make the film.

Dave Finnegan was cast as Mickah Wallace, a belligerent and hot-tempered bouncer who becomes a drummer for the band. Parker's first meeting with Finnegan began civilly before their exchanges grew more and more heated. They soon became verbally abusive, threatening each other with disturbing acts of violence. Parker cast Finnegan immediately, explaining that he simply wanted to test the limits of Finnegan's aggression, as he wanted the truculence of the character to be convincing. At the time of the film's production, Glen Hansard had established his own band, The Frames, before being cast as Outspan Foster, the band's guitarist.

Other young performers who could not secure a role as The Commitments band members were cast in various supporting roles. The audition scene in the film, in which various musicians audition at Jimmy Rabbitte's home required more than 100 band members to appear in the film. Jim Corr and his sisters Andrea Corr, Sharon Corr and Caroline Corr were among those who auditioned for roles at The Waterfront. Andrea was cast in the non-musical role of Sharon Rabbitte, Jimmy's younger sister, while Sharon and Caroline were cast as members of an Irish band known as "Country & Western"; Jim appears in a brief role as a member of the band "Avant-Garde-A-Clue".

Peter Rowan, the brother of Irish artist Guggi, appears as a young skateboarding boy who asks to audition for the band. At the time of the film's production, Rowan had appeared on the cover art of U2's albums *Boy* (1980) and *War* (1983), and was a national skating champion. Veteran actor Colm Meaney learned of the film while working with Parker on his previous film *Come See the Paradise*. After Parker held auditions for the young cast members, Meaney secured the role of Jimmy's father, Jimmy Rabbitte, Sr.

Parker described the young cast members as living "nomadic, rather dubious lifestyles", and stated that "it was hard to keep tabs on them — we had to issue mobile phones to those cast members who didn't have permanent phones. Even those who did were hard to pin down ..." Beginning in August 1990, the director spent five weeks preparing the main cast members, holding dramatic script rehearsals in the mornings and music rehearsals in the afternoons. He reflected, "I was able to work with them collectively and in smaller groups, as they became familiar with the script and their characters ... By the end of the month we had rehearsed each scene in the film over and over until our ten musicians had become actors and our two actors had become musicians and all of them had become an accomplished ensemble theatrical group. By the time we were ready to film, all the songs could be performed by the cast and we could run through the whole script, from beginning to end, in one stretch, just like a play."

### Filming

"I have not had a more enjoyable time filming than when I made this movie in the daily, hilarious company of these brilliant kids. There is

an old maxim that says that you don't have to have a good time in order to make a good movie, very often it's to the contrary — but some times it helps. Certainly I've done films (like *Pink Floyd – The Wall*) that were less than pleasurable experiences, but during the making of *The Commitments*, when I woke up each morning I couldn't wait to get to the set."

—Alan Parker, director

Principal photography commenced on 27 August 1990 and concluded in mid-October after 53 days on a budget of US\$12 million. Parker stated that filming *The Commitments* and working with the young cast members was his favorite filmmaking experience. While Doyle's novel is set in the fictional Barrytown (based on Kilbarrack, a residential suburb of Dublin where Doyle was a schoolteacher), Parker suggested to the author that the film take place in Dublin, Ireland; a total of 44 locations in the city were used filming. Regarding the overall look of the film, Parker stated, "It was our intention at all times to avoid the picture postcard locales traditionally associated with Ireland and show a contemporary, urban world a little different from viridescent, romantic notions normally associated with films about Ireland." The film's director of photography, Gale Tattersall, sought to create "a gritty, ugly look" that would become more composed and polished as the band became more successful; Tattersall felt that this visual style support the film's story arc.

The film's opening scene, depicting Jimmy Rabbitte (Arkins) trying to offload cassettes and shirts in a street market, was filmed on Sheriff Street, in front of the St. Lawrence O'Toole Catholic Church. A house located on Darndale in the Northside of Dublin was used to depict the Rabbitte family home. The home where Joey "the Lips" Fagan (Murphy) resides with his mother was a house located on 118 Pembroke Road in Ballsbridge. The production also filmed scenes at Ricardo's Pool Hall, a dilapidated pool hall located on 84–87 Lower Camden Street. The second floor of the pool hall was used to depict the band's rehearsals. The Archbishop Byrne Hall (also known as St. Kevin's Hall), located in the Portobello district of Dublin, was used to depict a local church community center, where *The Commitments* first perform on stage. The Saint Francis Xavier Church, Dublin,

located on Upper Gardiner Street, was used to film a scene in which Jimmy finds *Commitments* pianist Steven Clifford playing "A Whiter Shade of Pale" on an organ. The production team also filmed a scene at a Phibsborough bus depot; the location was used to depict Jimmy convincing Deco (Strong) to become a part of the band. A walkway, where Jimmy discusses his plan to form a band to Outspan and Derek was filmed at the Kilbarrack D.A.R.T. Station.

## Music

*The Commitments* does not have an original film score, but features existing music tracks. Music supervisor G. Marq Roswell spent several months during the film's pre-production listening to and categorizing hundreds of R&B songs before travelling to Dublin, Ireland to help Parker finalize songs that would be used in the film. Parker and Roswell had created a "short list" of 1,000 possible song choices. From May to June 1990, Parker had listened to more than 300 songs from the 1960s time period before narrowing his choices down to 75. The resulting film, according to Parker, features "68 different musical cues including 52 different songs". 24 songs were chosen by the director to be performed by the cast. Roswell also organized and oversaw the recording sessions.

The film's vocals were recorded live on set, as Parker wanted to capture the reality of the band's rehearsals and performances. The filmmakers used out-of-phase speakers, which enabled them to play pre-recorded constant backing tracks at maximum volume, creating a live performance atmosphere for the vocalists to sing to on set. Each vocal was then recorded live onto a 24-track recorder. Parker said, "Because of the out-of-phase speakers the vocals could be recorded cleanly, as they were filmed, for re-mixing later. This allowed us the technical precision needed for a complicated cut but gave us the truth, energy and spirit of a live performance. It also enabled us to interweave dramatic dialogue with the songs."

## Release

*The Commitments* had its worldwide premiere at the Cinerama Dome Theatre in Hollywood, California on 7 August 1991. The film also premiered at the Cineplex Odeon Century Plaza Cinemas in Century City, Los Angeles on 13 August 1991. The film was given a "platform release"; it opened in limited

release on 14 August 1991, playing at a total of eight theatres in its first week. On 13 September 1991, the film officially entered wide release, playing at 555 theaters, and expanding to 588 theatres by its seventh week. 20th Century Fox distributed the film in the United States and Canada, while the English-based distributor Sovereign Pictures handled international distribution.

### Box office

*The Commitments* grossed US\$271,333 on its first week of limited release—an average of \$33,916 per theater. The film grossed an additional \$268,653 in its second weekend, with an overall domestic gross of \$775,824. More theaters were added in its third week; the film grossed an additional \$1,366,223 from 104 theatres, which was a +409% increase from its second weekend. The film officially entered wide release in its fourth week; released to a total of 555 theaters in the United States and Canada, *The Commitments* grossed \$2,511,091 in its opening weekend of wide release, securing the number three position at the domestic box office. The film saw a significant drop in attendance during the following week, the film grossed \$1,752,234, a 30.2% overall decrease from the previous weekend. After eight weeks of release, *The Commitments* ended its theatrical run with an overall gross of \$14,919,570. In North America, it was the 80th highest-grossing film of 1991 and the 42nd highest-grossing R-rated film of that year.

### Critical response

*The Commitments* received generally positive reviews from mainstream film critics. The review aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes sampled 40 reviews, and gave the film a "Fresh" score of 88%, with an average score of 7.5 out of 10. It is also ranked seventh on Rotten Tomatoes' best reviewed films of 1991. Roddy Doyle, author of the 1987 novel, stated that Parker and the filmmakers did a "terrific job" on the film adaptation, though he found several scenes questionable: "One thing in *The Commitments* film which made me uncomfortable was the religious scenes and holy statues and such. The confession scene, very funny lines, but it annoyed me ... Kids do not go to confession anymore ... None of those kids in the film would have gone near a confession box."

*Variety* magazine called the film "well-executed and original", praising the performances of its young cast, and the "complex" editing by Gerry Hambling. Jonathan Rosenbaum of the *Chicago Reader* praised *The Commitments* as being Parker's best film. He said of the director, "Parker ... keeps it all lively and watchable. If he can't resist the occasional fancy or cutesy flourishes ... that tend to compromise his work, he still allows his material to exist on its own level and makes it fun to watch." Hal Hinson of *The Washington Post* wrote that *The Commitments* was a "a deadly funny movie; nearly every scene is broken off with a punch line. But Parker's sense of comedy is organic; he never lets the jokes elbow the characters, or the music, out of the spotlight." Kenneth Turan, writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, praised the performances and Parker's direction, writing, "A director known for bringing not the lightest of hands to some very heavy scenarios (*Midnight Express* and *Mississippi Burning*, for example), Parker has loosened up quite a bit here, not forcing the action as much as he did in the similar *Fame* and bringing a surprisingly loony touch to characters like Jimmy's Elvis-obsessed father. No doubt complicit in this good humor is Parker's cast, whose first-timer enthusiasm fills this film with the kind of cheerful, pulsating vitality it is impossible to fake and wonderful to share in." *Time* magazine reviewer Richard Corliss called the film a "rousing entertainment", adding that "The film offers no message, no solutions, only a great time at the movies."

Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times* wrote, "Parker introduces a Dickensian gallery of characters, throws them all into the pot, keeps them talking, and makes them sing a lot. The result is a movie that doesn't lead anywhere in particular and may not have a profound message – other than that it's hell at the top, however low the top may be. But the movie is filled with life and energy, and the music is honest." On the syndicated television program *Siskel & Ebert At the Movies*, Ebert gave the film a "Thumbs Up" rating, while his colleague, Gene Siskel, gave the film with a "Thumbs Down". Siskel, writing for the *Chicago Tribune*, praised the music, as well as the performance of Andrew Strong, but wrote that the film was "a joyful but empty mixture of Irish kids and black American soul music". Owen Gleiberman, writing for *Entertainment Weekly*, praised the "first-rate" musical performances, as well as Strong's "robust voice and ...

charismatically beefy presence", but criticized the film for having an unlikely premise: "The idea that the Commitments are doing something revolutionary by 'bringing' soul to Dublin is downright insulting. In Parker's hands, soul music becomes little more than a self-serving metaphor – an easy symbol for 'commitment' and integrity. His film celebrates musical daring without having a shred of it."

Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone*, praised the performances but criticized Parker's direction, writing, "Parker gives Dublin's poverty the same misplaced gloss he brought to the Japanese refugee camps in *Come See the Paradise*. And the predictable way in which the band's nine men and three women argue about music, sex and fame robs the story of urgency. The film is best when Parker just lets the cast rip." Janet Maslin of *The New York Times* was among several critics who drew comparisons to Parker's earlier 1980 film *Fame*: "What Mr. Parker has done, in effect, is to remake *Fame* in a different language ... *The Commitments* finds Mr. Parker again doing what he does expertly: assembling a group of talented newcomers, editing snippets of their exploits into a hyperkinetic jumble, and filling the air with song." David Denby of *New York Magazine* wrote, "Alan Parker's *The Commitments*, which might be called a Dublin version of *Fame*, is likable and bouncing, with a raspy surface authenticity and a great deal of affection for its characters and milieu but not much dramatic interest."

### Home media

*The Commitments* was released on VHS and laserdisc in the United States and Canada on 7 May 1992, by FoxVideo, Inc. A Region 1 DVD was released on 19 August 2003, by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment. The DVD presents the film in standard definition. Special features include a making-of featurette, a music video for the song "Treat Her Right", a theatrical trailer, and CD sampler that plays four songs from the motion picture soundtrack. A two-disc special edition DVD was later released on 16 March 2004. The first disc presents the film in widescreen, and features an audio commentary by Parker. Other special features include the theatrical trailer, the "Treat Her Right" music video with optional introductions by Parker and Robert Arkins, three featurettes, sixTV spots for the film, four radio spots, and a still gallery.

*The Commitments* was released on Blu-ray disc on 30 August 2016 by RLJ Entertainment, coinciding with the film's 25th anniversary. The Blu-ray presents the film in 1080p high definition, and contains all the additional materials found on the Special Edition DVD, as well as new interviews with Parker and the cast, and a collective booklet featuring production notes written by Parker.

### Accolades

*The Commitments* received various awards and nominations in categories ranging from recognition of the film itself to its writing, direction, editing and sound to the supporting performance of Andrew Strong. In September 1990, following its North American release, the film debuted at the 4th Tokyo International Film Festival, where it competed for the "Tokyo Grand Prix Award" and was nominated for the Best Director Award, with Parker winning in the latter category. In January 1992, the film received a Golden Globe Award nomination for Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy though it failed to win the award at the 49th Golden Globe Awards, losing to the animated feature *Beauty and the Beast*. On February 19, 1992, *The Commitments* received one Academy Award nomination for Best Film Editing, but lost to *JFK* at the 64th Academy Awards ceremony on 30 March 1992. At the 45th British Academy Film Awards, the film received six nominations, and won four for Best Film, Best Direction, Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Editing.

List of awards and nominations			
Award	Category	Recipient(s) and nominee(s)	Result
64th Academy Awards	Best Film Editing	Gerry Hambling	Nominated
49th Golden Globe Awards	Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy	————	Nominated



List of awards and nominations			
Award	Category	Recipient(s) and nominee(s)	Result
45th British Academy Film Awards	Best Film	————	Won
	Best Direction	Alan Parker	Won
	Best Adapted Screenplay	Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, Roddy Doyle	Won
	Best Editing	Gerry Hambling	Won
	Best Supporting Actor	Andrew Strong	Nominated
	Best Sound	Clive Winter, Eddy Joseph, Andy Nelson, Tom Perry, Steve Pederson	Nominated
34th Australian Film Institute Awards	Best Foreign Film	Roger Randall-Cutler, Lynda Myles	Nominated
1992 Brit Awards	Best Soundtrack	————	Won
1991 Evening Standard British Film Awards	Peter Sellers Award for Comedy	Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, Roddy Doyle	Won
12th London Film Critics Circle Awards	British Producer of the Year	Roger Randall-Cutler, Lynda Myles	Won
	British Director of	Alan Parker	Won

List of awards and nominations			
Award	Category	Recipient(s) and nominee(s)	Result
	the Year		Won
	British or Irish Screenwriter of the Year	Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, Roddy Doyle	Won
1992 Writers Guild of America Awards	Best Adapted Screenplay	Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, Roddy Doyle	Nominated
4th Tokyo International Film Festival	Tokyo Grand Prix Award	————	Nominated
	Best Director Award	Alan Parker	Won

## Soundtracks



A motion picture soundtrack album for *The Commitments* was released on 13 August 1991, by MCA Records. The soundtrack features fourteen songs, most of which appeared in various scenes in the film. Niamh Kavanagh performed as both a lead and backing vocalist in songs such as "Destination Anywhere" and "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man". The album spent 76 weeks on

the *Billboard 200*, rising as high as #8. Music guide AllMusic awarded the soundtrack three stars out of five. AllMusic reviewer Stephen Erlewine praised various aspects of the album, but the criticized it for sounding "a bit generic". Music critic Robert Christgau awarded the film a C+, calling the album "a cross between *The Big Chill* and *The Blues Brothers*" with performers who "sacrifice idiosyncrasy for competence".

After the commercial success of the first soundtrack album, a follow-up entitled *The Commitments, Vol. 2: Music From The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* was released on 17 March 1992. The album included four more songs from the film, as well as seven additional songs performed by the cast. Billy Altman, writing for *Entertainment Weekly* awarded a "B", praising the performers for "sounding more mature and together on their seven newly recorded cover versions here than on four left over from the film". AllMusic awarded the album 3 stars out of five, with Erlewine calling it "plain and forgettable".

***The Commitments (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)***

No.	Title	Writer(s)	Original artist	Length
1.	"Mustang Sally"	Mack Rice	Sir Mack Rice	4:02
2.	"Take Me To The River"	Al Green, Mabon "Teenie" Hodges	Al Green	3:36
3.	"Chain of Fools"	Don Covay	Aretha Franklin	2:58
4.	"The Dark End Of The Street"	Dan Penn, Chips Moman	James Carr	2:34
5.	"Destination Anywhere" (Niamh Kavanagh)	Nickolas Ashford, Valerie Simpson	The Marvelettes	3:08
6.	"I Can't Stand The Rain"	Ann Peebles, Don Bryant, Bernard "Bernie" Miller	Ann Peebles	3:12
7.	"Try A Little Tenderness"	Jimmy Campbell and Reg Connelly, Harry M. Woods	Ray Noble Orchestra	4:31
8.	"Treat Her Right"	Roy Head and the Traits	Roy Head and the Traits	3:35
9.	"Do Right Woman, Do Right Man" (Niamh Kavanagh)	Penn, Moman	Aretha Franklin	3:15

10.	"Mr. Pitiful"	Redding, Steve Cropper	Otis Redding	2:07
11.	"I Never Loved A Man"	Ronny Shannon	Aretha Franklin	3:09
12.	"In The Midnight Hour"	Pickett, Cropper	Wilson Pickett	2:21
13.	"Bye Bye Baby"	Mary Wells	Mary Wells	3:21
14.	"Slip Away"	William Armstrong, Marcus Daniel, Wilbur Terrell	Clarence Carter	4:27



***The Commitments, Vol. 2: Music From The Original Motion Picture Soundtrack***

No.	Title	Writer(s)	Original artist	Length
1.	"Hard To Handle"	Allen Jones, Al Bell, Otis Redding	Otis Redding	2:23
2.	"Grits Ain't Groceries"	Titus Turner	Little Milton	3:44
3.	"I Thank You"	Isaac Hayes, David Porter	Sam & Dave	3:40
4.	"That's The Way Love Is"	Norman Whitfield, Barrett Strong	Marvin Gaye	4:08
5.	"Show Me"	Joe Tex	Joe Tex	2:56
6.	"Saved"	Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller	LaVern Baker	2:54
7.	"Too Many Fish in the Sea"	Whitfield, Eddie Holland	The Marvelettes	2:45
8.	"Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (Sad Song)"	Redding, Steve Cropper	Otis Redding	2:52
9.	"Land Of A Thousand Dances"	Chris Kenner	Wilson Pickett	3:16
10.	"Nowhere To Run"	Holland-Dozier-Holland	Martha and the Vandellas	3:39
11.	"Bring It On Home To Me"	Sam Cooke	Sam Cooke	3:41

## Legacy



Clockwise from top left: Siblings Andrea, Caroline, Jim and Sharon Corr, who achieved international stardom with their band The Corrs after the film's release.

While only a modest success with North American audiences, *The Commitments* has since become a cult film. An image of four of the actors, in character, was featured on an Irish postage stamp as part of the *Ireland 1996: Irish Cinema Centenary* series issued by An Post; the image includes lead singer Deco Cuffe (Andrew Strong), along with the three "Commitmentettes" – Imelda Quirke (Angeline Ball), Natalie Murphy (Maria Doyle Kennedy) and Bernie McGloughlin (Bronagh Gallagher). In 1999, the British Film Institute ranked the film at number 38 on its list of the "100 best British films of the century", based on votes from 1,000 leading figures of the film industry. In 2005, a poll conducted by Jameson Irish Whiskey ranked *The Commitments* the "Best Irish Film of All time", based on 10,000 votes. The novel also gained popularity, becoming Doyle's most well-known work, which the author resented. "I dismissed *The Commitments* for a long, long time to the extent I forgot I had anything to do with it", he said.

After the film's release, many of the actors went on to pursue various acting and musical careers. Robert Arkins signed a record deal with MCA Records in 1993, although he did not finish recording the consequent album. He has produced work for a number of commercial clients, television projects, and composed music for two short films. Andrew Strong went on to produce several albums, which he described as

having elements of R&B and rock. He has performed alongside The Rolling Stones, Elton John and Ray Charles, and formed his own band, The Bone Yard Boys, in 2003. In 1993, two of the film's cast members, Kenneth McCluskey and Dick Massey formed their own tribute act band, The Stars from the *Commitments*. The 9-piece band has since played more than 1,000 shows worldwide, and has played with B.B. King, James Brown and Wilson Pickett.

Although she had a small, non-musical role in the film, Andrea Corr was the cast member who was the most successful; she and her siblings Jim Corr, Sharon Corr and Caroline Corr formed their own band, The Corrs, with the film's music coordinator John Hughes acting as their manager. The band has since achieved international stardom, releasing six studio albums and more than 60 million records worldwide. Andrea would again collaborate with Parker on his 1996 film adaptation of the musical *Evita*. Glen Hansard continued performing with his band, The Frames, and achieved greater success and critical acclaim with the 2005 film *Once*. Maria Doyle Kennedy and Bronagh Gallagher have had lengthy acting careers in film and television. Michael Aherne is the only cast member to have not pursued an acting career after the film's release.

On 6 October 2010, it was announced that Strong, Arkins, Ball, Gallagher, Aherne, Hansard, Félim Gormley and Dave Finnegan would join McCluskey and Massey's band The Stars from *The Commitments* for a reunion tour to celebrate the film's 20th anniversary. Advance tickets were sold one week later on 15 October 2010, and donations from every ticket sold were given to the Irish Cancer Society with a goal of raising €30,000. The cast performed at The Royal Theatre, in Castlebar, County Mayo on 14 March 2011; Ireland's National Events Centre (INEC) in Killarney, County Kerry on 15 March 2011; The Odyssey, in Belfast on 17 March 2011; and The O2 in Dublin on 19 March 2011.

### ***The Barrytown Trilogy***

*Main article: The Barrytown Trilogy*

The 1987 novel *The Commitments* was the first in Doyle's series of novels known as *The Barrytown Trilogy*, followed by *The Snapper* (1990) and *The Van* (1991). While all three novels focus on the Rabbitte family, Doyle

expressed that he was not interested in writing or producing sequels to the 1991 film adaptation: "I hope it's never made. I just think that, whereas *The Commitments* was very much a labour of love, *Commitments 2* is definitely an act of cynicism."



Colm Meaney is the only actor to have appeared in all three films based on Roddy Doyle's *Barrytown Trilogy* of novels.

Doyle was given creative freedom by the BBC over the adaptation of his second *Barrytown* novel, *The Snapper*, for which he wrote the screenplay. Lynda Myles returned to produce the film and hired Stephen Frears to helm the project. Colm Meaney was the only returning cast member from *The Commitments* to appear in the film. The adaptation was originally planned as a television film, but Frears later suggested that it be transferred to film. Doyle disagreed with the change, stating, "I didn't like it on the big screen—I thought it was grainy." *The Snapper* (1993) premiered at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival, where it received a standing ovation. Released in the United States by Miramax Films, *The Snapper* was a critical success, receiving largely positive reviews.

For the adaptation of the third *Barrytown* novel, *The Van*, Doyle and Myles formed their own production company, Deadly Films, and the author was given creative control over the selection of the film's cast and director. Frears returned to direct the film, and Meaney was cast in the lead role. Although it premiered at the 1996 Cannes Film Festival to positive reviews, *The Van* (1996) received negative reviews upon release in the United

States, with reviewers criticizing the film for its lack of strong characterization and thin material.

### Cancelled sequel

In January 2000, it was announced that Miramax commissioned playwright Warren Leight to write a direct sequel to *The Commitments*, with Cathy Konrad attached as a producer. The main plot for the sequel was to feature several members of *The Commitments* pairing with new band members before going on tour in the United States. Plans appear to have fallen through, as further production details have not materialized.

### Stage production

*Main article: The Commitments (musical)*

Doyle's novel inspired a 2013 musical stage production directed by British theatre director Jamie Lloyd. Following the film's success, Doyle had previously turned down offers to adapt his novel into a stage production. *The Commitments* began previews on 21 September 2013 in London's West End at the Palace Theatre. Its official opening night was on 8 October 2013. The show went on to perform more than 1,000 shows before officially closing in London on 1 November 2015. It has been announced that a United Kingdom and Ireland tour will commence in 2017.