

**ROLLING STONE REVIEWS
'PASSING STRANGE' CAST ALBUM**

FRICKE'S PICKS
BY DAVID FRICKE



WEIRD, GIFTED AND BLACK Stew (left) and Daniel Breaker in *Passing Strange*

Recorded in April before an audience at New York's Belasco Theatre, the original cast recording (*Ghostlight*) arrives a little late - the Broadway production closed in July - but preserves the songs' acerbic sting and dynamic whirl of New Wave snarl ("Sole Brother"), skewered vaudeville ("The Black One") and shape-shifting soul ("Keys"). You only get the voices of the superb cast and none of the show's visual, ingenious rock-gig pow, but this album will eventually double as a movie soundtrack: Spike Lee filmed one of the final performances.



...don't quite jell into stories, the jigs and jangle are natural magic. As a first, giant step, *A Larum* (the title is Old English for "alarm") is a dramatic entrance.

Strange Broadway

Before it was in workshop, off-Broadway, then on Broadway, the electric musical *Passing Strange* was a life story: the already rich, then brilliantly embroidered autobiography of the singer-songwriter Mark Stewart, a.k.a. *Stew*, who wrote and starred in the show. He rightly won a Tony this year for Best Book of a Musical - *Passing Strange* is his funny, unsparing dissection of growing up weird, gifted and black - but he and his co-composer, bassist *Heidi Rodewald*, deserved more.

