

Not quite a victor/y

"Victor/Victoria"
Julie Andrews, Robert Preston
B- Valley River Twin

"The key to theatre," said my drama professor, "is to get the audience to temporarily suspend its disbelief."

This is precisely where "Victor/Victoria" fails. With this primary element lacking, an otherwise excellent film is irreparably handicapped.

The story is set in Paris, 1934. The first world war has changed people's views of life and human nature, and the Depression has swept through, leaving Victoria Grant (Andrews) a penniless and hungry ex-opera singer. 'Toddy' (Preston) is a gay nightclub singer, recently fired for causing a brawl with some overly clever repartee. The two join forces, and 'Toddy' hatches a plan to pass Victoria off as the greatest female impersonator in Europe and make a fortune. Incredibly, it works.

"Ah, but for truly great drama," my professor would say, "there has to be a complication, something interfering with the heroines' success." This complication is 'King' Marchand (James Garner), a Chicago pseudo-gangster who falls in love with Victor/ia. To make matters worse, Victor/ia is attracted to him, and must decide between her fame and fortune and him.

The plot, wonderfully outlandish, depends ultimately on one thing for success: Julie Andrews must believably appear to be a man acting like a woman. Unfortunately, even her husband-director Blake Edwards can't get this performance out of her, and the film fails.

Everything's wrong. She drinks like a woman, she walks like a woman, she talks like a woman and she looks like a woman, in spite of the wizardry made possible through modern makeup techniques. No one could possibly be fooled by the charade. Without at least a foundation of semi-believability, the other characters'

acceptance of her as a man is ridiculous.

The other actors are better, thank goodness. Preston is good, if overstated, as the friend-confidant. Garner is excellent as the semi-mobster, afraid to be thought of as a homosexual, but unwilling to be without Victor/ia. Lesley Ann Warren is hilarious as his ex-moll, a typical dumb blonde with a voice so shrill it makes a Siamese cat sound soothing in comparison. Even Alex Karras is relatively good as Marchand's bodyguard.

The script, too, is excellent. Edwards, who brought the Pink Panther series to the screen, still has his sense of humor, and the one-liners keep hitting home. Unfortunately, Edwards resurrected the Inspector Clouseau character for a minor part, complete with predictable crunched fingers, pratfalls, etc. This was a minor irritation, for the detective character is just an unnecessary addition to an otherwise good plot.

With all its transvestism and homosexuality, this may sound like another modern, racy movie daring to face important issues in a changing society. Try again. "Victor/Victoria" was originally filmed in 1933 by Hans Henberg.

Edwards' modern version is something of a musical, with lots of dance numbers, and too many songs by Julie Andrews. To me, her voice is like a gallon jar of honey: it's pleasant enough at first, but it grows rather unpleasant by the end. In spite of Henry Mancini's excellent music, wine glasses aren't the only things that shatter when Andrews hits those high notes in her operatic mezzo-soprano.

All in all, "Victor/Victoria" starts with an excellent cast, a wonderful script, great settings and music, and loses it all because of Andrews' inability to convince the audience that she's a she playing a he playing a she. Blame it on poor makeup, on Andrews' acting, or on Edwards' direction, it comes out the same: "Victor/Victoria" is not quite a victory.

by matt meyer

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Adolescent 'Animal House'

"Porky's"
Kim Cattrall
Scott Colomby
C- Springfield Cinemas

Despite the commercials, "Porky's" isn't as bad as it would seem.

Yes, there's a lot of adolescent humor. Yes, they're preoccupied with sex, sex, sex. Yes, it's pretty ridiculous. But no, it's not a total waste of time.

There are two main plots (pretty tricky for an "Animal House" rip-off). In the first, "the gang" is out to de-virginify PeeWee, an irritatingly aggressive squirt. In pursuing Plot A they journey to Porky's, a strip joint with a rumored "playpen" where, for a price, customers can get to know the dancers a little better. Well, our lads get taken in royally, resulting in Plot B, the quest for revenge.

There are some downright hilarious scenes mixed in with the expected giggles. The editors' timing is perfect, and makes the most of the genuinely funny situations, although they sometimes drag it out a bit too much.

Although it's unbearably chauvinistic and terribly adolescent, at least it's a little funny. Save it for a rainy spring evening during economy hour.

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