

Cary-ied away

Kyle MacLachlan shines as the ghost of gay life past

BY CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN

Virtually no chronicle of the life and career of dapper screen legend Cary Grant—from William J. Mann's history of queer Hollywood, *Behind the Screen*, to a slightly more equivocal recent *Vanity Fair* article by James Wolcott—disputes the unusually close, couple-like nature of his relationship with his longtime “best friend” and “roommate,” Randolph Scott.

But the late Grant, like Rock Hudson, never considered coming out to be even a remote possibility. Writer/director Ian Iqbal Rashid's *Touch of Pink*, which opens Sept. 10 at Fox Tower Cinemas, riffs on Grant's presumed closetedness and the contradictory relationship of his glamorous, extroverted Hollywood image to his “discreet” life with Scott.

The film is haunted by the specter of an imaginary Grant (Kyle MacLachlan) who exists in the head of Alim (Jimi Mistry), a present-day movie set photographer happily domesticated in a London flat with his UNICEF economist boyfriend, Giles (Kristen Holden-Reid).

Alim's Grant-phantasm, the product of his youthful devotion to the actor and his films, acts as his analyst, conscience and mentor, guiding him through life with a dry, slightly bitchy sense of humor and a costume-designed fashion ensemble for every occasion. (Featuring nonutilitarian items like smoking jackets and pit helmets.)

Meanwhile, Alim's feisty, outspoken mother, Nuru (Suleka Mathew), to whom he hasn't yet come out, is living in their hometown of Toronto among their success-oriented Muslim family. Nuru feels superfluous in the excitement surrounding an upcoming family wedding and, with the peer pressure increased by her having misled the relatives into believing Alim is engaged to a (female) brain surgeon, lets Alim know she'll be crash-landing into his life with the explicit purpose of putting him on the heterosexual marriage track.

Alim and Giles have only just de-gay'd their place (with the aid of Grant, who has plenty of tips) when his mother arrives. Nuru is sari-clad but hardly the demure, fundamentalist stereotype of a Muslim woman; when Giles is charmed by her no-bullshit bossiness,

Grant remarks to Alim, “Well, your kind *does* have a thing for the brassy middle-aged broads, don't they?”

The rest of the film follows the uncomfortable situation through the expected comic awkwardness-inducing charade: Alim has to pretend to be Giles' landlord, and Giles' sister gets roped into the role of Alim's fiancée. There's a pleasing, old-fashioned screwball element that's executed with a fairly successful degree of humor and pathos—though it never reaches the helium-filled, stylized dizziness of last year's surprisingly good *Down with Love*, which paid less ambivalent homage to the bubbly Doris Day/Rock Hudson films of the early 1960s than *Pink* does to its namesake of the same period, the Grant/Day film *That Touch of Mink*.

Tolstoy's dictum about happy vs. unhappy families holds true in *Touch of Pink*; although Mistry and Holden-Reid make a disarmingly cute couple, it's at its blandest and most cliché-ridden when presenting their relationship in the placid, fulfilled phase before Nuru disrupts the routine forever.

Rashid's feature directorial debut actually flies much higher with its theme of escapist fantasy becoming shaky, dangerous ground when overindulged. MacLachlan's performance as Grant is actually brilliant for its relentless superficiality; he plays the star as a fantasy of a fiction, an appealingly glamorous but finally hollow achievement of mere image projection.

And while *Pink* does sometimes veer a tad closer to the cutesy, inconsequential “meet my zany ethnic family” feel of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* than the nitty-gritty everydayness of Stephen Frears' *My Beautiful Laundrette* or the tender dignity of Ang Lee's *The*



Currently closeted Alim is haunted by formerly closeted Cary Grant in *Touch of Pink*

Wedding Banquet—its predecessors in exploring the place where sexual minority issues meet racial minority issues in the individual lives of the protagonists—it doesn't botch its self-appointed task of exploring the conflict of acknowledging one's queerness while simultaneously embracing one's family and culture.

Touch of Pink's disparate elements don't ultimately gel, but enough of them work to leave us with a slight but mildly thought-provoking date movie that's mercifully low on the irritation factor. The plot has a too-neat conclusion, but the ending actually satisfies in the way it slyly poses some tough questions about the origins and breaking points of our fantasies and idealizations, which it seems to suggest can only desultorily obscure the real confusion and pain in our lives as we actually live them—as well as, more importantly, the potential for real, hard-earned peace and happiness. **B**

CHRISTOPHER MCQUAIN is a Seattle free-lance writer.

You'll get into it

The French bare all in likable coming-of-age film

BY JIM RADOSTA

You've gotta give props to the French. Politics notwithstanding, could a nonjudgmental, sexually explicit film about a gay high schooler even get made in the increasingly prude post-9/11 United States?

So much skin is on display in *You'll Get Over It*, which opens Sept. 10 at Hollywood Theatre. I initially found myself wondering whether director Fabrice Cazeneuve crossed that fine line separating the Todd Hayneses from the Larry Clarks. But when you consider that Tom Cruise and Lea Thompson were baring all 20 years ago in *All the Right Moves*, it's about time we had some equal exposure.



Gay teen angst in *You'll Get Over It*

outed to the entire student body after being spotted with new boy in town Benjamin. Making matters worse, his despicable brother spills the beans to their parents.

Benjamin is played with intriguing confidence by Jérémie Elkaim, who starred in 2001's *Come Undone*, another entry in the emerg-

Julien Baumgartner—sporting big, expressive eyes reminiscent of *Donnie Darko* hottie Jake Gyllenhaal—plays Vincent, a swimming champ whose life is ruined when he is

ing subgenre of queer cinema about young boys in love and lust. (For lack of a better name, let's call them “cumming-of-age films.”)

What elevates this movie, which screened during Portland's queer film festival last year, above similar stories are the well-rounded, complex characters affected by Vincent's sudden revelation: the girlfriend, who is somewhat self-absorbed but rightfully heartbroken; the best friend, who is hurt that Vincent didn't think he would be supportive; the closeted teacher, who begrudgingly offers a helping hand; the coach, who gives a stern but supportive pep talk; and the father, who struggles with acceptance but admits that he was raised to believe men must hide their feelings. The end result is marvelous—brutally realistic and devastating but ultimately triumphant.

The dialogue sometimes veers into after-school special territory (“When you're living a lie, you're trapped,” Vincent sighs), but so what? I wish I had a film like *You'll Get Over It* when I was growing up; instead, my generation had to make do with *The Blue Lagoon*. **B**

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