

by Kimberly_Gadette

Movie Review of "FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION"

Quoting Jack Benny on the subject of awards: "I don't deserve this award, but I have arthritis and I don't deserve that either."

Though Southern California has four seasons like any other part of the country, they are somewhat different -- there's Summer, Santa Ana/Fire, One Rainy Week and the biggest season of all ~ Award. Christopher Guest's latest film, "For Your Consideration" explores the nearly impossible attainment of the Holy Grail of Hollywood, the Oscar. In a recent interview published in the New York Times, Guest said, "I was struck by what happens to your psyche being nominated, the disruption of it. But the reason I don~t look at this as just a movie about Hollywood is this could happen in any world -- the Nobel Prize or the Booker Prize, anything -- where people are in such a delicate state in terms of their esteem that there is no way to process the information."

As with their three previous films ("Waiting For Guffman," "Best In Show" and "A Mighty Wind") this movie is once again the co-written creation of Eugene Levy and Guest. But unlike the other three, "For Your Consideration" does not utilize first-person interviews taken straight to the camera. But we do get treated to all the usual suspects, the well-known Guest repertoire of actors who have been accumulating since the 1984 "This is Spinal Tap."

The movie within a movie goes like this: Richard Simmons-esque director Jay Berman (Guest) directs his mediocre cast through an even more mediocre period piece about a Jewish family coming home to Georgia to visit the dying matriarch (Catherine O'Hara) at Purim, a minor Jewish holiday that is even less well-known than the actors. Upon a whisper that someone might have written something about award-worthy performances on the Internet ("the thing with email?" asks the clueless Unit Production Manager), the cast slowly begins to lose its collective mind. Helped along by the Hollywood Access/ET type team played by Fred Willard and Jane Lynch, the buzz picks up speed. Particularly affected is the aptly-named Marilyn Hack (O~Hara).

Though this film may be a bit too "inside" the movie industry, the underlying thread of wanting to win at any cost is microscopically well-examined. The film opens on O'Hara, emoting to her television screen, echoing Bette Davis' lines as she watches "Jezebel." When the guard at the gate of the studio mistakes her for a more successful actress, he suggests that she should have been in that starring film instead. As if she had a choice.

Post-film, pre-Award, her attempt to rejuvenate herself with vats of collagen, botox and peroxide is more than funny. It is terribly sad. We can almost smell the desperation. O'Hara is stunning, tears filling her eyes while the remainder of her face is frozen into a ghastly, botoxian grin. (The joke is that after all of O'Hara's brilliant work over the last 30 years, with this performance, it's time she actually does win an Oscar. Perhaps I'll start a rumor over the Internet myself.)

Sharply-skewered topics include Equity-waiver theater in Los Angeles, gay make-up men who pretend to have wives, agents who claim devotion while eagerly snapping up anyone else's calls on the first ring, the fake-happy team of tv entertainment personalities, idiot producers, method actors -- this film is dense with wonderful satire. Even if the viewer doesn't know his Variety from his Hollywood Reporter, to watch these actors strut their brilliantly-improvised stuff with so much creativity and just plain old-fashioned fun is sheer delight. With or without any awards, this film is an absolute winner.

Grading this movie on the curve of the Deschutes River: B-plus

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Production Credits: "For Your Consideration" Directed by: Christopher Guest Written by: Christopher Guest & Eugene Levy Cast: Bob Balaban, Jennifer Coolidge, Christopher Guest, John Michael Higgins, Eugene Levy, Jane Lynch, Michael McKean, Catherine O'Hara, Parker Posey, Harry Shearer, Fred Willard
Rated: PG-13 Running Time: 86 minutes Grade: B-plus