

Movie Review: 'Color Me Kubrick'

by David_Elliott

Here is a double law about con artist movies: Watching a clever person con bright people can be very entertaining; watching a sloppy hoaxer con stupid or ignorant people is only a fool's delight.

'COLOR ME KUBRICK' - Jim Davidson and John Malkovich star in the comedy 'Color Me Kubrick.'
CNS Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

The first truth will be affirmed by "The Hoax," the coming (April 6) movie with Richard Gere as con wizard Clifford Irving. The second is confirmed by "Color Me Kubrick," a flippant British comedy about the real but implausible hustler Alan Conway, who pretended to be director Stanley Kubrick while Kubrick was still alive (both have since died).

Whatever he thought of Conway, a verbose mess, perfectionist Kubrick probably wouldn't have cared much for the film, a less remarkable mess. He might have enjoyed John Malkovich, who gains some relief from being John Malkovich by impersonating the Kubrick impersonator.

His victims tend to be saps. As "Stanley" zips around London in absurd rigs, voice pitched at different angles, cadging drinks and food, cruising for young men, it never occurs to his victims that he has nothing like the rather Slavic features of Kubrick (known from many photos); that Kubrick was straight; that Kubrick had a New York accent even long after moving to Britain; that Kubrick famously bunkered into his country estate; that Web sites or film books could have clued them to such facts.

It's cute when classical music used in Kubrick films is employed here. And Kubie-baby is quite a name-dropper ("The trouble with Marlon is he thinks he's Brando"). The zinger about "Miss Kirk Douglas" is pushing the pedal too far.

Malkovich is haughty as he wheedles and sponges; his best acting is his instant white-out when a young target of the con reminds him that "Judgment at Nuremberg" came from Stanley Kramer, not Kubrick. He turns paler than Montgomery Clift in the "Judgment" courtroom.

Brian Cook's film is very Britty twitty. The tone congeals in the song "I'm Not the Man You Think I Am." And in Jim Davidson as a vulgar British lounge star, Lee Pratt, whose ego falls for Conway's supposed contacts in Vegas. Neither he nor his entourage recognize that "Moe Green" is a slime in "The Godfather" (now that's cultural ignorance).

When Conway's Stan finally employs a New York accent, on gullible Pratt, he sounds like Shelley Winters impersonating Charles Nelson Reilly. Or maybe it's New York as a swingin' suburb of York, England.

RATINGS

4 STARS - Excellent.

3 STARS - Worthy.

2 STARS - Mixed.

1 STAR - Poor.

0 - Forget It (a dog.) Never remotely probing, even when Conway cons himself into psychiatric treatment, "Color Me Kubrick" is a goof and a doodle. It can make you pine for John Hurt in "The Naked Civil Servant" or the truly witty faker played by Peter Sellers in Kubrick's "Lolita."

A Magnolia Pictures release. Director: Brian Cook. Writer: Anthony Prewin. Cast: John Malkovich, Jim Davidson, Richard E. Grant, Terence Rigby, Luke Mabley. Running time: 1 hour, 29 minutes. Unrated. 2 stars.

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