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Review a Movie



In & Out

Stars: Kevin Kline, Joan Cusack, Matt Dillon, Bob Newhart, Debbie Reynolds, Tom Selleck

Director: Frank Oz

Writer: Paul Rudnick

Premiere: September 19, 1997

PG-13
Some material may be
inappropriate for children
under 13.

This Movie's Official Web Site

In a few decades, when film scholars look back at the films of the '90s, "In & Out" may well be looked upon as a landmark in gay cinema history, but not for the reasons you might think.

A nimble, often hilarious satire about homosexuality in America's heartland, "In & Out" may be historic for the things it is not: It's not flamboyant, it's not uncomfortable, and it's not a movie with a message. In fact, the only thing shocking about this movie is how *unshocking* it is.

You see, until recently, mainstream America's uneasy pact with Hollywood regarding gay male characters has been that they can either be poignantly tragic in dramas like "Philadelphia" or fabulously queer in comedies like "The Birdcage" or "To Wong Foo ...". To paraphrase Homer Simpson, Americans like their beer cold, their television loud, and their homosexuals flaaaaaaming.

Then came "My Best Friend's Wedding" during which audiences cheered when the debonair gay friend (Rupert Everett) got the girl, but that was only a supporting part. Kevin Kline effortlessly takes that casualness to a leading role in a major studio film, and to my knowledge, nobody has batted an eye.

You've come a long way, Hollywood.

With the exception of a few minor complaints, "In & Out" delivers exactly as advertised. It's lighthearted and fun with Kevin Kline giving a performance that combines the pleasant charm of his work in "Dave" with his Oscar©-winning physical humor from "A Fish Called Wanda."

Kline's character is Howard Brackett, a high school English teacher in the quaint town of Greenleaf, Indiana. Howard is watching a former student of his (Dillon) win an Oscar© on TV when the actor, Cameron Drake, dedicates the award to his old English teacher, adding as a footnote, "And he's gay."

The announcement shocks Greenleaf, especially Howard and his fiancée Emily (Cusack), who are to be married in just a few days. Through the rest of the movie, we sit back in amusement and watch Howard as he struggles comically to find the truth about himself. One of the funniest sequences has Kline standing alone in his home listening to an instructional tape titled "Exploring Your Masculinity." Real men, declares the baritone-voiced instructor, do not dance — and as a test, disco music swells enticingly. "At all cost, avoid rhythm, grace and pleasure," the tape instructs, but Howard's dancing feet can not be stopped.

"In & Out" does a lot of fun-poking at gay stereotypes, but it spends just as much time lampooning Hollywood. A partial list of people who get good-natured ribbings are Richard Simmons, Paul Newman, Steven Seagal, Mike Tyson, Michael Jackson, Martha Stewart and Arnold Schwarzenegger. (Barbara Streisand should get a good-sportsmanship medal for all the kidding she takes.) "To Serve and Protect," the film for which Cameron Drake is nominated is a terrifically silly parody of films like "Platoon," "A Few Good Men," "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," and "Forrest Gump."

Screenwriter Paul Rudnick and director Frank Oz (you may know him as Yoda, Miss Piggy or Cookie Monster) look like they had a lot of fun making this movie, and the same goes for

the superb supporting cast. Joan Cusack and Debbie Reynolds (as Howard's mother) especially are terrific; Matt Dillon does a funny take on young superstars; Tom Selleck plays an understanding tabloid TV reporter; and Wilford Brimley oozes oatmeal heartiness as Howard's bewildered, but loving dad.

The movie's glaring weakness is the ending, which I will reveal only as much as to say that it gets its inspiration from the strangest of sources: "Revenge of the Nerds." Rudnick also could have done without including a few crude sexual jokes and some that make fun of eating disorders, mainly because they feel so out of place in a movie with as much good will as this one has. And while there is nothing wrong with Bob Newhart's performance as Howard's principal, the story's only homophobe, he seems unnecessary as well.

But this is a Hollywood mainstream comedy, and since they're only playing make believe anyway, even the bigot gets a hug in the end.

-- *Darren Futa*

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Ima Bye sexual, 20

Matt Dillon is a hottie

MM's, 14

The movie rules, it's like the funniest movie of the decade.

Jenni Penni, 12

That movie looks like it is going to be the funniest movie I have ever heard!

Skittles, 16

That movie looks hilarious!!



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