Bob Clark's

Porky's

Sitting through Porky's is rather like trying to eat a prune, whole. At first the notion may seem to be heaven sent but soon ugly reality rears its head. This film, just like the would-be sex act between titty-babes, is shallow, tedious and then out-and-out painful. Bob Clark would like to pass Porky's off as something of a playful romp and indeed it is, for a while, but soon the labour scenes, the simple-minded vision and the director's inability to set up a situation and then make it pay off dramatically frustrates the proceedings. What should have been good fun becomes a grind. The light touch is decidedly not Mr. Clark's strong point. As punishment for his misdeeds the man should be made to watch Some Like It Hot twenty-five times. What is truly irritating is that Porky's almost never arrives at any satisfactory thematic conclusions. We get a few good belly laughs on the way but we walk out of the movie feeling lousy. What less could you expect from a film that almost never addresses or tells the truth?

Were the '50s so mindless and tenious an era? One would think so, watching Porky's. Here Bob Clark depicts an age that, quite simply, never existed. We get Patti Page on the sound track and a whole bunch of vintage cars on the screen that we wish we could have for a moment—not even the director. One look at Les bous debarras or Les beaux souvenirs and we know precisely where we are because there is that rare thing that is rarity of rarities, an actor's director. The people in his films have an inner life so specific that they locate us in a time and a place. Which brings us back to the kids in Porky's and end the film in faceless anonymity with narry a one of them destined for stardom. Nobody here is believable. By comparison, the director's limitations is Susan Clark who does a brief turn, presumably, to help pay the rent on her California beach house. Her single entrance on screen is a lame, botched affair but the lady has enough style to make the movie's focal point. Why, it's even a gaffe to recapitulate the film's closing. When does a single gag like this deserve such treatment? Quite simply, a few minutes of the film. Does the script tell us anything about sex? There isn't one. Clark has not imbued his characters with any psychological dimensions whatsoever and consequently they come across looking and feeling confused. This film has no emotional centre. Sure, the cheap shots get a laugh, but that's about all.

Porky's is a personal film, the press releases tell us, a remembrance of Clark's glandular teens. One wonders. A quick look at the audience during one of the peak moments in the film and most of the women can be seen sitting cross-legged, smiling wanly, wondering just where they went wrong. A quick rundown of the female characters in this picture is inundated by the almost embarrassingly earnest treatment of the subject of racism. We've got a Jew-hating kid with a Jew-hating father (an ex-con, no less, with a leather jacket and a scar on his face) who, hopefully, will inject this persistently shallow film with some meaning. The net result is wince-making. If this film has been construed as nothing more than some good dirty fun why, then, is this necessary, particularly when the subject can be accorded nothing more than a passing glance by the director? This filmmaker is so out of touch with his material that when he's not playing the one note he thinks he understands be on, he's indulging in the most puerile stereotypes he can find. A director can impose an iron-clad script. There isn't one. Clark has not for worse, demonstrated that his directorial talents were coming together. By Decree, Tribute) was a bankable director and then moved on to do the films that proved that he was a bankable director and then moved on to more serious fare (Murder By Decree, Tribute) which, for better or for worse, demonstrated that his directorial talents were coming together. Porky's is a decided step backwards. It feels like the film Bob Clark made so that he could move on to do the films that really interest him. Now that the inevitable has happened and the film is being grossed millions, what sounds the truth in 20th Century Fox about Clark's next project? Why it's Porky's II. Of course, looks like we all get another shot at that two-hour orgasm.

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