Jack Darcus' Overnight

The friend with whom I went to see Jack Darcus' Overnight said half-way through the film, "It may be little. It may be Canadian. I don't care." She walked out. I only stayed to the end to watch a tremulous Gail Garnett, whose hoarse raspy whisper completely enchanted me, and Alan Scarfe, whose performance wittily sends up imported European 'artists'. Most everything else about the film is a mess.

Overnight tells the story of an unemployed actor (played by Victor Ertmanis, badly miscast) who, through various circumstances, finally ends up working in a porno flick. Darcus' film is described in the World Film Festival catalogue as, "an adult comedy about the making of a porno film, not showing nudity and still be very funny," (like a broader Dusan Makavejev). The role of the ruthless film director, who does not compromise his art until he's told to do so or gets a chance to sell out, had been old hat before it became a staple of the dime-store novel. Playing the role for laughs became clichéd only slightly afterwards. It is only the relish with which Alan Scarfe plays his role that makes it fun to watch.

The scenes in which the porn stars teach the 'real' actor lessons in loyalty, humility and dedication lack consistency of tone. When Gail Garnett tells Ertmanis off for jeopardizing the film, you know she's being serious (like Mickey and Judy were about their shows). When the porn star ejaculates before a close-up, you know it's meant for laughs (like a broader Dusan Makavejev). Most of the time, however, Darcus tries to express both humour and truth and fails to communicate either.

As often happens when one tries to make 'The Great Drink' by mixing different kinds of good spirits, the various elements of Overnight simply explode in different directions. The humour is never quite funny and the satire is itself worthy of being satirized. Jack Darcus seems to be an intelligent and articulate artist in print but if I were Telefilm, I too would consider taking my name off Overnight.

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