

REVIEWS

Bob Clark's **Porky's**

Sitting through *Porky's* is rather like trying to have a two-hour orgasm. 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 becomes, in turn, frustrating, 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 one, for a while, but soon the laboured jokes, 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 and nobody seems to believe it for a moment - not even the director. One look at *Les bons débarras* or *Les beaux souvenirs* and we know precisely where we are because Francis Mankiewicz is that rarity of rarities, an actor's director. The people in his films have an inner life so specific that they locate us in time and place. By comparison, the kids in *Porky's* begin and end the film in faceless anonymity with narry a one of them destined for stardom. Nobody here is beautiful enough to be fascinating or ugly enough to be interesting. Why, these kids are so processed-looking they don't even have zits! The one performer in the film, however, capable of overcoming 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 give the movie a few glimmering moments of life. The rest of the actors in this film seem to have died and passed on to caricature heaven. Without a director around to set the pace Kim Cattrall (who ought to know better), Alex Karras and Nancy Parsons mug their way into oblivion. They're on their own in this film and they know it. The acting becomes desperate and soon pulling off a comic moment starts looking like hard work.

Porky's unfolds in Florida and just to prove it we have a rather gratuitous shot of an alligator which looks as confused about the proceedings as we do. So much for the cinematic texture of this film. Production designer Reuben Freed does his best to give the surroundings some life but other than recreating *Porky's* scuzzy bar itself, there is little scope for this man's usual inventiveness. To further undermine the proceedings is Reginald Morris's cinematography.



● Mugging their way to oblivion: Kim Cattrall, Boyd Gaines and Nancy Parsons

graph. His camera always seems to be in the wrong place chasing after a scene rather than anticipating it. This must have been one set fraught with difficulties. A director can impose an iron-clad vision on a film, rather like Hitchcock, or be wonderfully inventive and just allow the camera to capture the creative moments. When neither of these things happen, you can bet that a movie is in for big trouble. Many of the situations in *Porky's* have gotten terribly out of hand without any clear objectives set by the director. An example is the supposed high point of the film where an errant penis finds its way into the ladies' shower room only to get yanked at by the angry Miss Balbricker (get it?). The director plays what should have been a surprising and funny moment to death. The scene goes on and on and on and becomes the movie's focal point. Why, it's even given a reprise at the film's closing. Since when does a sight gag like this deserve such treatment? Quite simply, the chief difficulty here is the script. There isn't one. Clark has not imbued his characterizations 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 film gives us the explanation. We get a bitch mother, the ball-breaking lady gym teacher, a repressed nymphomaniac, a cruel and punishing prostitute, more sluts than you can shake a stick at, and an army of fresh young things who would like nothing better than to spread their legs at the drop of a hat. This movie isn't about life. It isn't even about other movies. It looks and feels like a masturbation fantasy. Just the sort of thing you'd want to release during March school break.

All of which leads us to ask ourselves, "Is sex a serious enough subject on which to base a film?" You bet it is. But since this film doesn't honestly explore the subject, both the audience and the director are left feeling a little uncomfortable. Enter the subplot. This motion 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 he aims for the big stuff - relevance - and misses by a country mile. After all, if such a trite and unimportant subject as sex should be treated as nothing more than a joke, why then should racism fare any better?

If nothing else, *Porky's* is one film that is destined to make a great pile of money and in these troubled times that is good news, indeed. But is it necessarily good news for Bob Clark? The man has paid his dues in this business. He has made the horror film 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 grossing millions, what sounds the muse at 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.

David Eames ●

PORKY'S p.c. Porky's Production (Astral) Inc. d./sc. Bob Clark p. Don Carmody & Bob Clark exec. p. Harold Greenberg, Melvin Simon music Carl Zittler, Paul Zaza d.o.p. Reginald H. Morris, c.s.c. p. des. Reuben Freed ed. Stan Cole ad. sup. Ken Heeley-Ray cast. Mike Fenton, Jane Feinberg as. soc. p. Gary Goch p. man. Martin L. Gillen 1st a.d. Ken Goch 2nd a.d. Donald R. Brough p. exec. Stephen Greenberg, Eddy Rosenberg p. acct. Rejane Boudreau sp. eff. Martin Malivoire cam. op. Harold Ortenburger post-prod. ed. Ken Heeley-Ray advisor Roger Swaybill creative liaison Sandra Kolber Simon Dist. Inc. rep. Elton MacPherson asst. to the p. Cindy Morton Rossy unit man. Josette Perrotta p. office co-ordinator Harriet Birnholz 3rd a.d. Alan Goluboff cont. Branche McDermaid set dec. Mark Freeborn, Paul Harding bookkeeper Dawn Hudson asst. bookkeeper Céline Daignault exec. asst. Victoria Barney art dept. co-ord. Barry Broly asst. art d. Barbara Tranter 2nd asst. art d. Daniel R. Davis prop. mast. J. Tracy Budd asst. propa. Robert James asst. set dec. David Charles sp. eff. man. Neil Triunovich sp. eff. asst. Walter Woloszczuk costumes Mary McLeod, Larry Wells wardrobe mistress Erla Lank wardrobe asst. Esther O. Robinson, Harold Richter makeup Aunt Valli makeup asst. Aunt Linda hair J.B. hairstylist Tom Sobek 1st asst. cam. Gordon Langevin 2nd asst. cam. Kevin Jewison 3rd asst. cam. Patti Morein loc. ad. mix. Rodney Haykin Panaglione op. Craig E. Di Bona Steadicam op. Ted Churchill stills Jack Rowand boom Omero Pataracchia cableman Barry Wilson gaffer Thomas V. Elmore best boy Paul D. Bolton elec. Ron Chagwidden, Michael Beer, Kenneth Dunning general op. Eugene Moffatt key grip Jonathan Hackett asst. key grip Wayne Goodchild grips Roy Irvine, Joe Cuse, Perry Jones craft services Brad Blackwood additional casting The Casting Directors food Location Caterers/Atlanta stunt co-ord. Dwayne McLean stunt players Courtney Brown, Betty Raymond, Alex Edlin, Peter Tora, Roger Womack, Gary Maas, Butch Raymond, Chuck Mitchell construction co-ord. Harold Collins vehicle co-ord. Frank Kandaras asst. ed. Richard A. Cadger 2nd asst. ed. Chantal Bowen unit publicist Orin Borsten post-prod. sup. John McAulay asst. ad. ed. Brenda Hewitt, Steven Cole dialogue ed. Ann Heeley-Ray and Martin Ashby eff. ed. Andrew Malcolm, David Evans and Kevin Ward re-rec. mixers Joe Grimaldi, Dino Pigat, Austin Grimaldi prod. asst. Joel Greenberg, Andrew Waman, Robert Birnholz, Jim Connell Florida State Film Interns Rob Goodridge, Jay Tobias transp. captain Sam Segal music consultant Gerry A. Young Jr. Dan Monahan Mark Henner Wyatt Knight, Roger Wilson, Cyril O'Reilly, Tony Ganos, Kaki Hunter, Kim Cattrall, Nancy Parsons, Scott Colomby, Boyd Gaines, Doug McGrath, Susan Clark, Art Hindle, Wayne Maunder, Alex Karras, Chuck Mitchell, Eric Christmas, Bill Hindman, John Henry Redwood, Jack Mulcahy, Rod Ball, Julian Bird, Bill Fuller, Will Knickerbocker, Bill Worman, Roger Womack, Gary Maas, Ilse Earl, Jill Whitlow, Pat Lee, Terry Guthrie, Joanne Marsic, Pete Conrad, Butch Raymond, Cash Baron, Charles Spadard, Lisa O'Reilly, Allene Simmons, Cathy Garpershak, Jon Cerka, Don Daynard distributor 20th Century Fox Astral Film Distribution.