

Entertainment

Markham Movie Scene

Rhinestone just doesn't glitter

By IAN BAILEY

Aside from trend-oriented movies (Breakin or Beat Street) and sequels (Star Trek III or Conan the Destroyer), what could be more of a sure thing at the box office than tossing a known star quality into a movie. Better yet, two stars.

Somewhere in Hollywood there is a studio executive who must have thought that casting Sylvester Stallone opposite Dolly Parton would be this kind of sure thing.

One can almost hear him musing: "Wow! We get Stallone and we get Parton. And we let him play a tough guy, but a loser... Rocky! And Parton... she's gotta sing. We'll make her a country singer. Wow! It'll clean up!"

Rhinestone, the result of this pairing, may indeed succeed at the box office, filling the coffers

of its studio as audiences are drawn in to see this urban/rural odd couple. If it does, Rhinestone will succeed at something. God knows it doesn't cut it as a comedy.

The plot must have seemed like a terrific vehicle for its stars, mainly because it's easy for them. Rhinestone is a macabre version of My Fair Lady, twisted to fit Stallone and Parton. Parton is Professor Higgins to Stallone's unbelievably dim Eliza Doolittle.

The only thing that has been changed here is the location and the milieu: from Victorian England and upper class manners to New York and country music. It's a change more comfortable for the actors, their images, and their most rabid fans.

Parton's Rhinestone pseudonym is Jake Ferris, a country singer at a rowdy New York club.

To prompt her lecherous boss (Ron Leibman in the film's best performance) to release her from her contract, she agrees to participate in an odd wager.

If she can mold a randomly selected stranger into a country music warbler good enough to appease the regular hecklers at the club, she'll be released. If she fails, Jake will have to sleep with her boss.

The "stranger" is Sylvester Stallone, in the guise of taxi driver Nick Martenelli. Jake thinks he is a bum. He thinks she is a reject from "Hee Haw." He also hates country music. When they're together a few sparks fly in a relationship devoid of sincerity or originality.

The combination of Stallone and Parton must have seemed like an explosive way to make the most of the premise, but the result is as explosive as wet dynamite or diluted gasoline.

As directed by Bob Clark (who directed Porky's I and II) from a screenplay co-authored by Stallone, Rhinestone is more interested in substituting conflict between well conceived characters with a conflict between the stars' images.

For the fans, Stallone is his usual tough and urban loser with dreams of success. Parton is fiery, rural and buxom.

Along with patently charming, Richard Farnsworth (The Grey Fox), as her father, her image wins over Stallone's. She wrings some charm out of her role.

Regrettably, she is not charming enough to overwhelm Stallone, who plays dumb with a capital "D." He is as appealing as one of the more extroverted apes in Grey's Anatomy. Most important is that he is so obnoxious he ruins the relationship central to the film — Jake and Nick.

The only thing worse than Stallone are the film's running jokes (jockey itch, big organs, Nick's father's fascination with Parton's anatomy) which are only relieved by Dolly Parton doing what she does best — singing.

Rhinestone has a few nice tunes, most of which were written by Parton. Stallone sings a few of them and does adequately, especially since they seem to have been shaped for his flat voice. They are brought to his level as the whole wretched movie is brought to his and Parton's level.

Rhinestone is now playing at Markville Cinemas



Nick Martenelli (Sylvester Stallone) is a New York City cab driver and Jake Ferris (Dolly Parton) has just two weeks to turn him into a country singer in Rhinestone, currently playing at the Markville Cinemas.

Now showing

The following movies are showing at local theatres:

MARKVILLE CINEMAS
 1) Star Trek III (PG), starring William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy
 2) Top Secret (AA), a spy satire from the makers of Airplane
 3) Rhinestone (PG), reviewed this week

THORNHILL SQUARE
 1) Ghostbusters (PG), starring Bill Murray and Dan Aykroyd
 2) Conan the Destroyer (AA), opens Friday
 3) Romancing the Stone (AA), starring Michael Douglas

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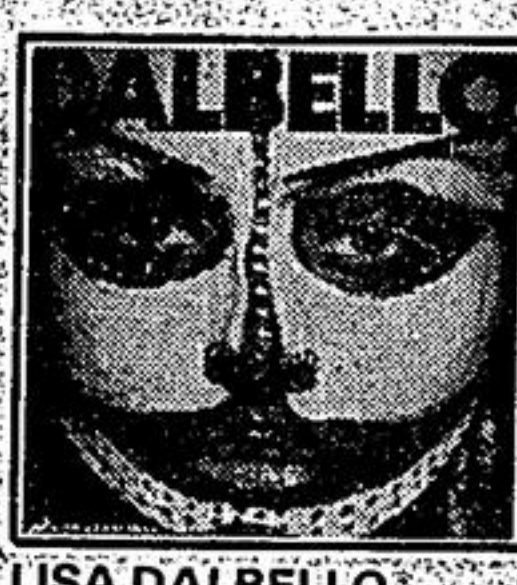


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 8:00 p.m.—The All-New Artie Shaw Orchestra in association with CKCL 1430

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