



WOMAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA

The Mirror Has Two Faces

+ intro by BFI Events Programmer Kimberley Sheehan

Rose (Streisand), an unlucky-in-love college professor, is at the end of her tether with dating. Thanks to her sister's meddling she's thrown together with Gregory (Bridges), a fellow professor who has determined that his ideal marriage is a platonic one. Barbra Streisand's third feature as a director is an underappreciated, witty romcom gem with a fabulous Oscar®-nominated turn from Lauren Bacall (as Rose's mother).

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A contemporary review

It's beginning to look like Barbara Streisand is on a one-woman campaign to revive the genres of old Hollywood – first the strenuously romantic melodrama of *The Prince of Tides*, and now this film, a satisfyingly old-fashioned romantic comedy destined to tickle the sensibilities of those who find contemporary American cinema too mechanised, macho and noisy, a film which (aided by its shrewdly pretty images of New York in the snow) will find its perfect niche on Christmas television in three years' time. It's a film out of time, as its somewhat self-conscious recurring references to the likes of *Now, Voyager*, *It Happened One Night* and *Brief Encounter* underline. Straight women and gay men will love it, which is perhaps just as it should be with any text bearing the Streisand imprimatur.

The pleasures it offers are rare ones today – unobtrusively well-crafted direction, richly rounded performances and a general air of being made by and for grown-ups – and if the other side of that coin contains the predictability of the plot and the last-reel concession to retrogressive sexual politics that is this genre's inescapable burden, I doubt whether audiences will complain too much. The acting in particular is a joy: Streisand is always best in comedy, and here she underplays (a career first?) to perfection, creating in Rose a wholly believable amalgam of wised-up smartness and romantic yearning. It's also the most Jewish Streisand in years, with wisecracks, asides and facial gestures that Woody Allen might envy. Jeff Bridges adds another unfussily exact performance to his already impeccable CV, while Lauren Bacall bestows an extra layer of shimmering stellar poise. Her exchanges with Streisand, as still-manicured mother comforts ugly duckling daughter, are especially relishable, and there is a commendable emotional maturity in the way they eventually find a deeper understanding.

The main drawback the film has is its slightness: if you peer behind the immediate pleasures on offer there's very little story here at all. There's a strikingly, almost endearingly naive account of higher education, with Streisand not only the advocate of a Leavisite literature-equals-life philosophy

that lost all credibility decades ago, but also the bravura guru-teacher who knows her hundreds of students' first names. It's her pedagogical pyrotechnics that first draw Bridges into her orbit, and her subsequent coaxing and coaching of him into being a better teacher is the film's preferred metaphor for their growing closeness.

The key theme of the film is the issue of physical attractiveness. Our first glimpse of Rose shows her caked in a face-pack, cramming down junk-food and watching baseball. By the end she has become a low-fat glamourpuss, her baggy jumpers replaced by slinky dresses. It would, perhaps, be uncharitable to point out that to me at least she looked far happier in the former and, frizzed out perm to the fore, not unlike *Coronation Street's* brassy Liz McDonald in the latter – but that lack of charity stems from an unease about the film's argument that bookworms need to trim at the gym if they're going to snag their man. Bacall's character is crucial here, since not only does she exude a feline radiance women half her age would envy, but because she made a living as a beautician: thus Rose is more than a disappointment to her mother's ideological convictions regarding femininity, she is an affront to her professional capabilities.

The film's concluding standpoint is that Rose needs both brains and beauty. The shallowness of having just the latter is crassly indicated by a scene in which the new-look Rose entices then spurns her slimy brother-in-law. This having-your-cake-and-eating-it resolution may seem gratuitously utopian (albeit congruent with the golden-age-of-Hollywood logic of the film), but it is a little more interesting once you relate it to the position of Streisand herself, never the most conventionally gorgeous of women but nonetheless the owner of a lengthy and culturally significant career that the other, more decorative new female stars who emerged in the late 60s could only dream of (anyone seen Ursula Andress lately?). We have so few stars left with her commitment to starriness that anything she does needs to be seen. So while *The Mirror Has Two Faces* may be wafer-thin in terms of dramatic substance, its event status is assured by Streisand submitting herself once again to the indignities of the marketplace. And not least of the film's comforting delights is the sight of the old girl carrying it off with such aplomb.

Andy Medhurst, *Sight & Sound*, February 1997

THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES

Director: Barbra Streisand
Production Companies: TriStar Pictures, Phoenix Pictures, Barwood Films
Executive Producer: Cis Corman
Co-executive Producer: Ronald Schwary
Producers: Barbra Streisand, Arnon Milchan
Associate Producer: Ari Sloane
Unit Production Manager: Tony Mark
Production Supervisors: Sue Jett, Raymond Quinlan
Production Co-ordinator: Lori Johnson
Location Manager: Declan Baldwin
Location Supervisor: Lyss Hopper
1st Assistant Director: Amy Sayres
Script Supervisors: Mary Bailey, Karen Kelsall
Casting: Bonnie Finnegan, Todd Thaler
Casting (Associate): Helen Suh
Casting (ADR): Burton Sharp
Screenplay/Screen Story: Richard LaGravenese
Original Film Adaptation: André Cayatte, Gérard Oury, Henri Jeanson
Original Dialogues: Henri Jeanson, Claude Marcy, Jean Meckert, André Cayatte
Directors of Photography: Dante Spinotti, Andrzej Bartkowiak
2nd Unit Director of Photography: Richard Quinlan
Camera Operators: Gary Jay, Dick Mingalone, Patrick Capone
Camera Operator (B): Craig DiBona
Steadicam Operator: Gregory Lundsgaard
Editor: Jeff Werner
Additional Editing: Alan Heim
Production Designer: Tom John
Art Director: Teresa Carriker-Thayer
Set Decorator: John Alan Hicks
Set Decoration: Pamela Turk
Master Scenic Artists: Leslie Saulter, Richard Ventre
Costumes: Theoni V. Aldredge
Wardrobe Supervisors: Tommy Boyer, Ginnie Patton
Make-up Artists: Ed Henriques, Randy Houston Mercer, Lynn Campbell
Hairstylists: Susan Germaine, Lyndell Quiyou, John Quaglia
Titles/Opticals: Cinema Research Corporation
Music/Music Adapted: Marvin Hamlisch
'Love Theme' Composer: Barbra Streisand
Orchestrations: Jack Hayes, Brad Dechter, Torrie Zito
Music Supervisors: Barbra Streisand, Jay Landers
Supervising Music Editor: Charles Martin Inouye
Additional Music Editing: Tom Drescher
Production Sound Mixer: Thomas Nelson
Re-recording Mixers: Kevin O'Connell, Greg P. Russell
Supervising Sound Editors: Charles L. Campbell, Louis L. Edemann
Sound Editors: Ron Eng, Harry Cheney, John Arrufat, Mark Larry, Steve Ticknor, Lenny Geschke, John Colwell, Chuck Neely, Richard Franklin
ADR (Mixer): Charleen Richards
ADR (Supervising Editor): Gail Clark Burch
ADR (Editors): Laura Graham, Zack Davis
Foley: Alicia Stevenson, Marco Costanzo
Foley (Recordist): Robert Crozier
Foley (Mixer): David Alstadter
Stunt Co-ordinator: Vincent Deadrick Jr

Cast

Barbra Streisand (*Rose Morgan*)
Jeff Bridges (*Professor Gregory Larkin*)
Pierce Brosnan (*Alex Rogers*)
George Segal (*Henry Fine*)
Mimi Rogers (*Claire Rogers*)
Brenda Vaccaro (*Doris*)
Lauren Bacall (*Hannah Morgan*)
Austin Pendleton (*Barry Neufeld*)
Elle Macpherson (*Candace, 'Candy'*)
Ali Marsh (*first girl student*)
Leslie Stefanson (*Sara Myers*)
Taina Elg (*female professor*)
Lucy Avery Brooks (*Felicia*)
Amber Smith (*Felicia (video)*)
David Kinzie (*Claire's masseur*)
Rabbi Howard S. Herman (*rabbi*)
Thomas Hartman (*reverend*)
Trevor Ristow (*Trevor*)
Brian Schwary (*Mike (student)*)
Jill Tara Kushner (*Jill (student)*)
Randy Pearlstein (*Randy (student)*)
Stacie Sumter (*Stacie (student)*)
Cindy Guyer (*taxi stealer*)
Thomas Saccio (*taxi driver*)
Andrew Parks (*waiter*)
Jimmy Baio (*Jimmy the waiter*)
Emma Fann (*Henry's first date*)
Laura Bailey (*Henry's second date*)
Mike Hodge (*justice of the peace*)
Anne O'Sullivan (*Gloria*)
Sandi Schroeder, Kiyoko M. Hairston (*female students*)
Ben Weber, Christopher Keys (*male students*)
Lisa Wheeler (*female aerobics instructor*)
Kirk Moore (*male aerobics instructor*)
Regina Viotto (*make-up artist*)
Paul Labrecque (*hair colourist*)
Ruggero Comploj (*waiter*)
William Cain (*Mr Jenkins*)
Adam Lefevre (*doorman*)
JoAn Mollison (*irate woman*)
Carlo Scibelli (*opera man*)
Eli Roth (*student*) *

USA 1996

126 mins

* Uncredited

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