



LOUISE SNIDER

## 'Star' close-ups are all Barbra

"A Star Is Born" (R) contains enough close-ups, medium close-ups and extra close-ups of Barbra Streisand to satisfy the most devoted fan for the next 17 years, and then some.

In addition to the famous Streisand profile, there also are numerous shots of the Streisand bosom, pendulous, and the Streisand buttocks, "cute" they tell us several times in the movie.

While, God knows, Barbra worked hard on this picture as executive producer, overseeing everything and everyone, if she demanded so much camera time as leading lady, perhaps she should have spent an hour a day at Vic Tanny's. The pudginess under her chin and around her shoulders make her look like an inflated rubber doll.

At the lean extreme is Kris Kristofferson, who drapes his mainly body around the contours of a guitar, or occasionally, Barbra. His favorite prop, however, is either a beer can or a whiskey bottle. He clutches one or the other throughout most of the movie, as if he would lose his balance without it.

THIS IS DONE to help even the most backward audience grasp that Kristofferson is playing an alcoholic. With his dingy clothes, his unkempt hair and beard and his constant gazing, one is grateful that the movies haven't perfected smell-o-vision.

Ms. Streisand's wardrobe is a mixed lot, reputedly from her own closet. The costumes range from harem finery to Salvation Army basic to Louis the Hatter. Someone couldn't make up her mind here.

What do Streisand and Kristofferson have in common with Judy Garland and James Mason? Not much, except that "A Star Is Born" is the fourth remake of a movie that was last brought to the screen in 1933 with Garland and Mason playing the leads.

Briefly, the original story is that of an aspiring actress who is discovered and nurtured by an actor who's already been a star. He's been drinking for years, and his career is starting to falter. They fall in love, marry, and he is responsible for her initial development and success as an actress.

As she achieves stardom, his career skids to oblivion. He realizes that he's become a handicap to her, so he removes himself from her life. The final scene shows her bravely facing an audience in the best "show must go on" tradition.

IN THIS NEWEST version, the general storyline is the same, but the principals have been changed from movie stars to rock stars. The transposition from the Hollywood milieu to the rock concert circuit was a good idea that gives the movie a more contemporary thrust, but it's the only good idea in this new production.

Streisand doesn't evince the poignancy that Garland did, schmaltzy though that production was, and Kristofferson can't effect a drunk who also elicits some sympathy or shows some dignity the way Mason did.

The shallowness of plot and character development leaves us with the music—which ranges from mediocre to very good. All the creative energy seems to have been directed toward the concert scenes; everything else falls flat in comparison.

Unfortunately, the evening I saw this movie, one reel had a defunct sound track. But even when the "good" reels were rolling, the sound track wasn't that good, particularly in the first half.

Frankly, this is a dumb movie. It was dumb when Mason and Garland played it in 1933, but we had Mason's crisp accent and Garland's pathos to entertain us. It was dumb when Fredric March and Janet Gaynor played it in 1937, but during the depression years, sentiment was entertainment.

IT WAS DUMB when George C. Scott first directed it in 1951 (called "What Price Hollywood?"), but at least then it was novel. And if someone ever produces a fifth remake, it will still be a dumb movie.

I just wonder why anyone wanted to bother with a remake at all. The producers may have been inspired by the original theme of "A Star Is Born," but with a few more changes, they could have freed themselves from the old mold and struck out in more interesting directions.

In "Nashville," director Robert Altman not only gave us great sound, but he captured the tempo and tenor of the audiences, the performers and the manipulations of the world of country and western music. Further, he managed to tie it in with a larger, more significant, theme.

Maybe, just maybe, Streisand and company could have done something like this for rock music—bolder and more imaginative. But they settled for the fourth remake—a case-role of leftovers that weren't very good to begin with.



James (Simon Williams, left) runs for Parliament and his stepmother (Hannah Gordon) and father (David Langton) actively support his candidacy in the second episode of "Upstairs, Downstairs."

## 'Upstairs, Downstairs' returns

The internationally successful public TV series "Upstairs, Downstairs" returns for its fourth and last season Sunday, Jan. 16, at 9 p.m. on Channel 56.

The 16 new episodes are set in the wild and crazy twenties and will air in successive weeks in the same Sunday time slot.

In the opening show it is July 1919, and the Bellamy household is in a subdued state of shock after the Great War. Upstairs, Lord Bellamy (played by David Langton) is newly married. James Bellamy (played by Simon Williams) has become sobered by his war experiences and Georgina Worsely (played by Lesley-Anne Down)

has grown from an awkward teenager into a young beauty.

Downstairs, the head butler Hudson (played by Gordon Jackson) and the cook Mrs. Bridges (played by the late Angela Baddeley) are familiar but aging figures. Rose (played by Jean Marsh) is now promoted to Lady Virginia Bellamy's personal maid.

IN THE COMING installments, the residents of 165 Eaton Place come to grips with the permissive jazz age, the growing technology and the winds of social change. Historian Alastair Cooke introduces each episode, putting it in its historical context. The closing season of "Upstairs,

Downstairs" has been stretched from the usual 13 installments to 16 bringing the series to a suitably powerful conclusion.

The Bellamys and their servants have progressed in dramatic chronology from the very first story, which was aired four years ago and set in 1903. The final scenes of the 68th and

last episode are played out on a chilly London day in the winter of 1929. Appropriately, Rose has the last few minutes to herself.

Jean Marsh and fellow actress Eileen Atkins originated the idea for the series which is watched by 300 million people in more than 30 countries and has won six Emmys.

### How to send news items

Ethel Simmons is entertainment editor for the Observer & Eccentric newspapers.

News releases, photos or other information on theater, movies, night life and restaurants can be mailed to Ms.

Simmons at the Observer & Eccentric, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012, or delivered to any office of the Observer & Eccentric.

The Birmingham office can be reached by phone at 644-1100.

### Dining And Entertainment Guide

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## GLIMPSES

### NEW RELEASES

**THE ENFORCER (R).** Violence and gun play in the "Dirty Harry" manner as Clint Eastwood shoots it out with a terrorist gang in San Francisco in this third film in the series.

**KING KONG (PG).** The big ape is back again with his same old destructive but sensitive personality. Jessica Lange plays the love in his life. Revised version with some tongue-in-cheek dialogue.

**NETWORK (R).** Pierce satire attacking the television industry and mass media generally. Top performances by Peter Finch, Faye Dunaway and William Holden in fast-paced, grimly humorous film.

**NICKELODEON (PG).** Director Bogdanovich recalls for madcap early days of movie making. Ryan and Tatum O'Neal. Burt Reynolds, Stella Stevens and Jane Fonda survive the perils and have some fun.

**THE PINK PANTHER STRIKES AGAIN (PG).** More clowning with Inspector Clouseau (Peter Sellers) who fumbles his way to victory. This time against the demented ex-chief inspector who would destroy the world unless he's given Clouseau, dead or alive.

**THE SEVEN PEAK CENT BOLLIVIER (PG).** Sherlock Holmes and Sigmond Freud join forces, but the result is less than stimulating. However, location photography in Vienna and Robert Duvall's performance as Dr. Watson are excellent.

**THE SHAGGY D.A. (G).** If you're looking for a "G" film, this is about the only one in town. A Disney movie about a politician with an unusual affliction.

**SILVER STRIKE (PG).** Gene Wilder, Richard Pryor, Patrick McGowan and Jill Clayburgh make tracks in this comedy-thriller about murder and mayhem on a train, and sometimes off.

### MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G General audiences admitted.
- PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
- R Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.
- X No one under 18 admitted.

### U.S.S.R. SPARTAK

The current U.S.S.R. Champions, Spartak will be led by Team Soviet members Zinger, Korotkov, Kulikov, Fiodorov, and Galikov from the recent Canada Cup Series. Having defeated The Red Army and The Wings of Soviet for the Russian Championship, Spartak will display the speed, discipline and style that has characterized that country's hockey development. The Detroit stop is part of a United States tour that will find Spartak playing eight games.



VS.

### TEAM MICHIGAN

Composed of All-Stars from the Great Lakes Junior "A" Hockey League, Team Michigan will ice an almost all Michigan line-up. Representatives from the Detroit Junior Wings, the Fraser Highlanders, the Paddock Pools, the Wayne Americans and the Cleveland Junior Boros will make up the squad. Coaches include Steve Harrison of the Junior Wings, Mike Kessler of Fraser and Bill Hossler of the Pools.

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