



the movies

Louise Snider

## 'Victor/Victoria' mixes the sexes with broad humor

Homosexuality has not only emerged from the closet but from the film can. It suddenly has become a popular subject for movies. While some directors have treated it (or attempted to treat it) seriously, as in "Making Love" and "Personal Best," Blake Edwards has taken the opposite approach with "Victor/Victoria." (PG) The result is that he conveys more with his comic invention that others do with their dramatic conflicts.

Edwards wrote, directed and co-produced the movie. His previous effort was "S.O.B.," a black comedy on the hazard of being a Hollywood director. Box office receipts suggest that audiences didn't take to the biting sarcasm and inside jokes.

No one, however, will miss the jokes in "Victor/Victoria." The humor is broad and includes enough slapstick to launch a Pink Panther film (and Edwards has launched many).

"VICTOR/VICTORIA" takes place in Paris during the 1930s. Julie Andrews plays Victoria, a classically trained singer who is down on her luck, like most everyone else in the '30s. She meets Toddy (Robert Reston), a homosexual entertainer who also is unemployed, and he devises a plan to make her a show-biz sensation.

Before you can say "voilà," she becomes Victor, a female impersonator. Victor is a sensation. He wows audiences with his oh-so-believable female impersonation. And what a voice! He shatters glass as he hits E-flat.

It's the big time and big bucks for Victor and Toddy, but there are complications, such as a very restricted social life. A major complication is a visiting American nightclub owner, King Marchan (James Garner). He comes to the opening of Victoria's nightclub act and falls for her (unaware that the act is supposedly that of a female impersonator), only to discover at the end of the act that Victoria is (supposedly) Victor.

Victoria also falls for him. But what's a girl to do when, in order to keep eating, she has to keep pretending she is a boy so she can keep pretending to impersonate a girl?

That should give you some idea of the kind of jokes that abound in this movie. It doesn't, however, tell all. Such as how good Robert Preston is as Toddy or how good the supporting cast is generally.

GRAHAM STARK as a droll waiter accounts for the funniest episode in the movie. It's a restaurant scene in which Victoria, when she was unemployed, decides to treat herself to a big meal and then pull the "There's a cockroach in my salad" routine to avoid paying the bill. The waiter is on the losing side of this encounter, as he is elsewhere in the film.

Alex Karras is another actor in a supporting role — he plays Marchan's bodyguard "Squash" — who contributes a lot with a subdued performance. It is a welcome, low-key contrast to Norma, the platinum blonde floozie played by Lesley Ann Warren.

Warren seems to have drawn her character from Judy Holliday with a little of Marilyn Monroe thrown in for good measure. In this case, the whole is decidedly less than the sum of its parts. Warren works too hard at being funny and ends up being loud and abrasive. James Garner doesn't fare much better in his role. He just sits around with a perpetual raised eyebrow and quizzical expression. There is more chemistry between Andrews and Preston than between her and Garner.

The musical numbers are lavish, but one or two could have been cut without loss. And it must be said, Julie Andrews didn't master the nuances, in fact, the basics, of a triple characterization.

But she looks so good, both as Victor and Victoria. Her singing is bright and crisp, the movie is filled with pert observations about sexual identity, and it is all done with a lot of wit and warmth.



## Animated classics

Favorite Walt Disney films return to Detroit-area theaters for the Easter season. Mickey Mouse reaches for the stars as the Sorcerer's Apprentice in "Fantasia." Irwin Kostal conducted the new sound track, based on the original by Leopold Stokowski. (Below) Robin Hood stirs up a daydream in "Robin Hood," which uses the voices of Peter Ustinov, Phil Harris, Brian Bedford, Terry-Thomas, Andy Devine, Pat Buttram and others.



## what's at the movies

**CHARIOTS OF FIRE (PG).** True compelling story of two runners. One runs for the glory of God, the other to battle bigotry. Outstanding and elevating movie.

**DEATHTRAP (PG).** The film version of Ira Levin's comedy suspense thriller starring Michael Caine, Christopher Reeve and Dyan Cannon.

**FANTASIA (G).** Disney masterpiece of sight and sound, now re-recorded in state-of-the-art digital Dolby stereo (G).

**HOUSE OF WAX (PG).** Classic 3-D horror movie of all time is re-released. Starring Vincent Price, Frank Jovovick, Phyllis Kirk and Charles Bronson.

**I OUGHT TO BE IN PICTURES (PG).** Spirited 19-year-old daughter of once-successful Hollywood writer walks in on father she hasn't seen in 16 years. Neil Simon's newest comedy stars Walter Matthau, Ann-Margret and Dinah Manoff.

**MONTENEGRO.** Film of a woman's desire and need to escape, starring Susan Anspach and Svetozar Cvetkovic as Montenegro.

**ON GOLDEN POND (PG).** Beautiful, sensitive and humorous film about an older couple's 48th summer at the cottage as they reflect on their lives and relationships. With Katharine Hepburn and Henry Fonda.

**PORKY'S (R).** Director Bob Clark's rowdy, raunchy comedy of adolescence derives its title from the name of a notorious redneck dive to which six lusty teenagers are hypnotically drawn.

**QUEST FOR FIRE (R).** This science-fiction epic follows three courageous warriors forced to venture beyond their tribal lands when their life-sustaining flame is lost during a battle.

**ROBIN HOOD (G).** Exploits of the merry men of Sherwood Forest and their fearless leader get a new twist by Walt Disney in this animated feature (G).

### 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.



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