

'Green Book' hits the right notes

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««« out of ««««

Running Time: 130 minutes

It has been more than two decades since filmmaker Peter Farrelly co-wrote and co-directed the hits *Dumb and Dumber* and *There's Something About Mary*. In the time since, the quality of work produced has been, well, not quite as stellar.

The past decade alone has seen spotty output from the filmmaker that includes titles like *Hall Pass*

The Three Stooges

,

Movie 43

(which I absolutely hated) and

Dumb and Dumber To

. So when it was announced that his latest feature was generating positive buzz, this reviewer couldn't help but be suspicious.

Inspired by a true story, *Green Book* is an early '60s set drama/comedy that follows Bronx bouncer Tony Lip (Viggo Mortensen).

After his position at a local nightclub is put on temporary hold, the protagonist begins looking for other means of employment. An unusual offer comes in from celebrated black classical pianist Dr. Don Shirley (Mahershala Ali). Tony is hired to drive and attend to the artist for a concert tour lasting eight weeks through the Deep South.

The two radically different personalities clash at first, but previous prejudices are challenged as the pair begins to spend more and more time together.

In many ways, the movie depends entirely on the interaction between the two leads. Thankfully, the two stars are exceptional in their roles.

Early scenes gently play upon the contrasting personalities, with Lip's rather direct, tough-guy vernacular causing some conflict with erudite pianist Shirley. As the leads butt heads, they also end up discussing broader concepts and ideas.

The movie allows the characters to grow and help each other in unexpected ways. Shirley finds himself partaking in a few of his driver's unusual habits, while Lip is assisted by his employer in writing more verbose and romantic letters to his wife. Many of these low-key scenes are surprisingly funny and endearing.

Of course, as they head deeper into the tour, the pair become victims to horrific treatment and

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even dangerous threats. These moments lead to deeper conversations about racism as the two are forced to deal with these attitudes first hand, making Lip reassess his own beliefs.

Since the characters are well established by this point, the discussions and arguments about handling the various situations encountered become far more resonant. Without the right touch, this all could have come across in a heavy-handed fashion, but the tone and developing respect and affection between the characters is perfectly performed.

The movie also looks quite pretty, displaying plenty of period flavor and neon lights during the city scenes, beautiful country on the roads and some nicely lit snowbound sequences. It all aids in creating an authentic mood and ambiance as Shirley and Lip move from location to location.

Overall, the technical specs are just as striking as the performances.

In the end, the movie works incredibly well and stands as one of the better films of the season. As such, the man who made *Movie 43* may soon find himself nominated for an Oscar in the coming months, and he absolutely deserves it.

Green Book couldn't be any more effectively made. It is sweet without being overly sentimental, somehow managing to find the right tone. And the movie's two excellent central performances simply keep hitting the right notes, resulting in an engaging and very satisfying tale.

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