

‘The Glorias’ is a solid, but surface-level biopic

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 09 October 2020 06:30



Rating: «««« out of «««««

Running Time: 147 minutes

***The Glorias*, from Roadside Attractions and LD Entertainment, is available for purchase on Digital and Streaming exclusively on Prime Video.**

Gloria Steinem has lived a remarkable life as a journalist, activist and a spokesperson for the feminist movement in the United States. Her incredible accomplishments serve as the inspiration for this biopic. *The Glorias* attempts to condense the woman's many pursuits and experiences into one narrative. There's a lot of passion on display, and for youngsters the film should serve as a stirring introduction to her work.

It's a good film overall, although it ultimately feels like a surface-level examination of its subject that could have reached even greater heights had it been willing to dig a little deeper.

Based on Steinem's own autobiography, the feature intercuts important experiences at four particular ages in her life (played, from youngest to oldest, by Ryan Kira Armstrong, Lulu Wilson, Alicia Vikander and Julianne Moore). In her early years, we see Steinem's family life and the influence of her mother (Enid Graham), who was a writer, as well as her father (Timothy Hutton), a huckster of sorts who may have fostered a streak of adventure in the young woman.

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As expected, more time is spent with the college-age Steinem traveling the world and making her start as a journalist in a male-dominated world, and then her time as an adult fighting for feminist causes. As the story progresses, the four individual Glorias appear together on a bus, interviewing each other about their various choices in life.

The cast is excellent and despite the jumping around between various time periods, the overall performance feels unified and consistent throughout, despite four different performers playing the same role. While most know about Steinem’s public life, it is interesting to see the figure’s relationship with her eccentric parents. Of course, the beginnings of her career are also intriguing as we witness the hardships faced in getting her work taken seriously by male editors, and her successes, including a piece going undercover to detail the less-than-glamorous life of a Playboy bunny. As the picture progresses, we also see her develop a talent for public speaking and her personal relationships with important feminist figures like Dorothy Pittman Hughes (Janelle Monáe) and Bella Abzug (Bette Midler).

There are interesting moments and scenes throughout that generally help viewers get a broader sense of Steinem’s many accomplishments. And on a technical level, there are some effective transitions as the movie jumps from one era to another and back again. Yet, while the technique works in some instances, there are other elements that do take one out of the proceedings. The increasing focus on the four different Steinem ladies on a bus interacting and cracking jokes feels forced.

On a technical level, the heavy green screen work in these scenes and the occasional use of surreal dream-like imagery to depict inner turmoil stand out in a negative way and distract from the film.

The movie also has an overly glossy appearance. This stylized approach might not have been the best tactic, considering the story is about a character trying to connect with all women from different backgrounds. A grittier look would have added more authenticity. And of course, it’s tough to get very deep into Steinem herself when the story is based on the figure’s personal perception of her own experiences.

There is a scene when the older protagonist appears on *The Larry King Show* and is verbally attacked by a caller. While she brushes off the experience on air, you can still see a pang of sadness and pain in the hurtful comments. This is a powerful moment and one might wish that the movie had dealt with its lead enduring these kinds of trials.

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The movie isn't a prize-winning effort and given its already extended running time, likely should have delved even further into the mind of its subject. Still, *The Glorias* does have strong individual moments, and for anyone not familiar with its subject, does serve as a decent, if somewhat superficial entry point to the life of a very important figure in modern history.

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