

CINEMASCOPE by Dave Wood

New York, New York, a Martin Scorsese film starring Liza Minnelli and Robert De Niro, is a movie whose great potential has been somewhat spoiled in the transition from idea to actuality. Minnelli plays Francine Evans, a popular singer of the post-war era who somehow falls in love with and marries sax-player Jimmy Doyle (played by De Niro), only to find that her partnership with him dies when her career sky-rockets and his doesn't. A familiar story line, but one which encourages virtually endless variation and improvisation. In New York, New York, however, the classic appeal of "boy meets girl, boy marries girl, boy leaves girl" plot is only partly

present.

What went wrong, then? Well, the potential of the characters is spoiled by the drab performances of Minnelli and De Niro, for one thing. Francine Evans is a dynamic, confident, appealing character, but Liza Minnelli just doesn't get into it right. Only when she sings does she manage to convey the charm of Francine's personality. And as for Robert De Niro, well, he only partly succeeds in portraying Jimmy as the forthright, determined, yet sensitive character he should be. However, the film does have its moments. The scene in which Jimmy visits Francine in hospital after the birth of their son is full of comic sadness emphasized by

Jimmy's break-up with Francine that same day. The scene in which Jimmy visits Francine backstage and asks her out to dinner after her exuberant final production number is also full of real reeling. Moments of genuine impact such as these occur frequently enough to save the movie from total mediocrity, and even manage to offset the blighting effect of Minnelli's big production numbers.

When Liza Minnelli sings as Francine Evans with Jimmy Doyle's band at first, she is good. As an unpretentious jazz singer she is sincere and enjoyable to watch and listen to. Later, however, when she hits the big time, she loses most of her attractive innocence and becomes ridiculously overdramatic when performing. Certainly the role of Francine Evans requires a steady decline into the depths of forties and fifties tackiness, but Minnelli carries it past the point of credibility.

Her final number is a big performance of the theme song, "New York, New York" in concert, and she presents herself as a grotesque caricature of the typical superstar of the age.

In sum, then, whether or not New York, New York appeals depends on what your priorities are. If you go for predictable plotlines spiced up with emotional interludes, some nice singing, and some over-glittery production numbers, then New York, New York is for you. On the other hand, if you require characters who are consistently three-dimensional, a few surprises in the story, and if you are turned off by overproduced and spectacular stage musical productions, New York, New York might prove a bit much for you. And, if you're like me, you'll leave the theatre feeling moved, entertained, dissatisfied, and disappointed all at the same time.



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