

Film Review: Cluttered, Melodramatic 'For Colored Girls' Never Comes Together

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 5, 2010 - 9:24am

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Ntozake Shange’s choreopoem “For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf” was a landmark event in 1974, giving voice to a segment of society rarely seen on the stage. It took 34 years for a filmmaker to tackle this remarkable work in film form and Tyler Perry’s “For Colored Girls” retains some of the inherent power of its source and features some strong performances in the process but never finds the narrative cohesion needed to translate it to modern movie audiences.

The stage version of “For Colored Girls” consisted of nothing more than monologues or poems – stories, life lessons, and confessions of a group of women finding their voices through expression. Perry takes several of those expressions and works them into a narrative, adding other characters, relationships, and connective tissue in an effort to make a piece of poetry into a piece of prose. The biggest problem is that it’s not that easy. Poetry works for different reasons than prose. Theater works for different reasons than film. And Perry too often gets caught in the gray area in between the multiple forms that he’s trying to weave into one fabric. It’s too easy to see the seams.



[Read Brian Tallerico’s full review of “For Colored Girls” in our reviews section.](#) [17]

More damagingly, the new structure of “For Colored Girls” falls victim to its own structure because Perry is forced to insert another emotionally draining scene nearly every five to ten minutes. Hearing different voices express the pain of their lives has a much different impact on an audience than trying to turn it all into one interconnected story. “For Colored Girls” becomes numbing in its melodrama as we know each moment of pain will be followed by another one a few minutes later. And it lessens the connecting scenes when it feels like they are merely pushing us to another breakdown. There are more shots of tears and snot in “For Colored Girls” than any other movie in a very long time.

“For Colored Girls” basically tells nine interconnected stories – that of Crystal (Kimberly Elise), Jo (Janet Jackson), Juanita (Loretta Devine), Tangie (Thandie Newton), Yasmine (Anika Noni Rose), Kelly (Kerry Washington), Nyla (Tessa Thompson), Gilda (Phylicia Rashad), and Alice (Whoopi Goldberg). All of the characters are related either directly or through minimal degrees of separation. For example, Alice is the mother of Nyla and Tangie, who lives across the hall from Crystal, who works for Jo, and so on. Every character in “For Colored Girls” comes with significant, life-changing drama including abuse, rape, murder, addiction, promiscuity, unplanned pregnancy, and more. There’s enough melodrama in “For Colored Girls” for an entire season of most soap operas.



[Continue reading for Brian Tallerico’s full “For Colored Girls” review.](#) [17]

‘For Colored Girls’ stars Kimberly Elise, Janet Jackson, Loretta Devine, Thandie Newton, Anika Noni Rose, Kerry Washington, Tessa Thompson, Phylicia Rashad, Whoopi Goldberg, Omari Hardwick, Michael Ealy, and Hill Harper. It was adapted and directed by Tyler Perry. It opens on November 5th, 2010. It is rated R.



For Colored Girls

Photo credit: Lionsgate

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 1:43am):

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