

Christina Aguilera, Cher Star in Horrible ‘Burlesque’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 24, 2010 - 9:31am

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Rating: **0.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – I worry that some impressionable youth will see Steve Antin’s horrendous “Burlesque” and be turned off musicals forever. This is not a musical. This is a music video; an ego piece for two fading stars that is one of the most creatively bankrupt pieces of cinema in years. Actually, most music videos are better.

By now, it’s become common for critics to sharpen their knives and take turns stabbing at vanity projects of pop stars like Mariah Carey’s “Glitter” and Britney Spears’ “Crossroads,” but don’t let the thinking that critics couldn’t possibly like Christina Aguilera’s “Burlesque” convince you that the onslaught of negative reviews sure to greet this junk is wrong. Just because “Burlesque” can join and perhaps even top all other pop starlet film projects in a film festival from hell doesn’t make the predictable response any less valid. Just because history taught us that “Burlesque” would probably suck doesn’t make it suck any less. In fact, it sucks even more than you expect it to.



Burlesque

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Christina Aguilera, giving one of the worst performances of the year in a film that could run the Razzies, stars as Ali, a small-town girl from Iowa who moves to Los Angeles because, as she claims, she looked around and didn’t see anyone she wanted to be in the heartland. She finds inspiration in a burlesque club, where apparently she looked around and saw that she wanted to be mediocre drag queen.

The club owner Tess (Cher) may not be hiring, but Ali knows she can be the best burlesque dancer in the city of angels. When she first gets to the club, she meets the people who will serve the necessary plot devices for her rise to stage fame including Tess, bartender Jack (Cam Gigandet), host Alexis (Alan Cumming), stage manager Sean (Stanley Tucci), Tess’ ex-husband and co-owner Vince (Peter Gallagher), star

dancer Nikki (Kristen Bell), and millionaire playboy Marcus (Eric Dane).

After she’s denied a job on-stage, Ali refuses to leave and starts serving as a waitress while she memorizes the routines she sees every night. Of course, she starts a flirtation with Jack and even ends up sleeping on his couch while his fiancée (Dianna Agron) is out of town. Meanwhile, Tess is pressured to sell the failing club, but she refuses to give up on her dream and sees a future for her business when Ali turns the nightly show from a lip-syncing one to a performance. Essentially, the burlesque show becomes a Christina Aguilera concert every night. Only the most hardcore fans will find that enjoyable.



Burlesque

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

Musicals with thin narratives are nothing new. Pop starlet tales of young girls rising to fame are often filled with cliché. One shouldn’t expect too much character from a movie called “Burlesque.” These are the excuses that the team behind “Burlesque” hope you will use to defend its flaws. And yet even if I go along with all of these arguments I can’t think of a single nice thing to say about the film.

Yes, musicals often are short on plot but they compensate with exciting, moving song-and-dance routines. Such is not the case with “Burlesque.” The covers are awkwardly-choreographed or simply-miscast (Kristen Bell is never once believable as a sexy stage siren) and when Aguilera starts singing her own material, the songs might actually make you wish for some more cheesy dialogue. In one of the most ironic twists, Jack has a through-line in which he’s working on writing a song but constantly saying it’s not done yet. When it’s finally heard, we wish he would have kept working on it. Imagine a subpar pop album turned into a glossy movie and you’ll easily picture most of “Burlesque.”

What you’ll miss in your mind’s eye is the complete lack of character, dialogue that nearly sounds like it’s vying for “Showgirls”-esque cult status, and a horrific aesthetic in which everyone looks like they’re constantly covered in makeup and bathed in a spotlight. Even the technical elements of “Burlesque” – the cinematography, editing, costumes, makeup – are just bad.



Burlesque

Photo credit: Sony Pictures

But nothing compares to the acting and the script, which are a reminiscent of what a ten-year-old girl would conceive after watching “Moulin Rouge!” and listening to Disney Radio at the same time. “Burlesque” is about a place that sells sexuality that isn’t sexy. It’s a romance with no chemistry. It’s a musical with no memorable tunes (there’s nothing to hum on your way out the door at all). It’s one of the least-inspirational tales of sticking to your passion ever made.

There are bad pop songs released all the time; cliched plots, dull romances, melodramatic misfires. Like a stage show that promises all the variety you can imagine, “Burlesque” features all of the above. Maybe we were too hard on “Glitter.”

‘Burlesque’ stars Christina Aguilera, Cher, Stanley Tucci, Alan Cumming, Kristin Bell, Cam Gigandet, and Eric Dane. It was written and directed by Steve Antin. It opens on November 24th, 2010. It is rated PG-13.



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