

Lady Gaga Characterizes the Title 'A Star is Born'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 4, 2018 - 3:53pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Stefani Joanne Angelina Gemanotta, also known as Lady Gaga, is the only reason to see the latest iteration of 'A Star is Born.' The luminous stage presence that propelled her to music superstardom is present in her major film debut, taking the female lead reins from Judy Garland and Barbra Streisand.

The rest of the film, directed by the male lead actor Bradley Cooper, is a choppy journey through the template of fading male star/rising female star and their relationship. This story line was established in the original 1937 "A Star is Born" starring Janet Gaynor and Frederic March, with Judy Garland in 1954 giving it a spectacular musical spin, Barbra Streisand switching to musicians rather than actors in 1976, and now Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper continuing the musician path with the current version. It was Cooper that made some choices with his character that are distracting, and the story just doesn't have a launching point, preferring to hang its hat on addiction without real depth or explanation. Regardless, fans of Gaga will go gaga over her acting chops, and it is likely that the divine Lady G may add an Oscar nomination to her many accolades.

Bradley Cooper is Jackson Maine, a popular musician who is covering for a tinnitus (ear) problem and his past woes with booze and pills. An accidental reroute of his limo propels him to a dive bar with a singer named Ally (Lady G) doing a slam-bang rendition of "La Vie en Rose." Smitten, the drunk singer invites the cabaret crooner to an after-hours hangout, where he proceeds to get into a fight.



Jackson (Bradley Cooper) Loves Ally (Lady Gaga) in 'A Star is Born'

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

After that rocky launch, the couple starts to percolate when Jackson invites Ally onto his current tour, and she sings one of her original compositions on his stage. This gets her a connection to a producer, who reworks Ally into "Ally," and starts her rise up the charts. Although pleased that he launched her and subsequently marries her, the problems that Jackson has are still plaguing him, and it affects the rising star.

Cooper's use of Jackson "Maine" as his character is a nod to Norman Maine, the name of the male role in the first and second film versions. He also adopts a gravelly-but-familiar accent, which is damn distracting until it's revealed why he does it... and even then it's oddly unnecessary. Addiction is a serious subject, and while the story hopscotches over the reasoning for Maine's problems (his ear and his father), the constant itch for the bottle is not so much tragic as it is frustrating, based on what is revealed to the audience. The grade for all of that is incomplete.

But then there is Gaga, who rises above the pedestrian script to deliver a tender and vulnerable performance as Ally. There are nods to her roots, but instead of her Dad being a restaurateur, he is a limo driver thinly portrayed by Andrew Dice Clay. With her unconventional beauty and soul driving sensitivity, Gaga makes a wondrous connection to her character and illuminates it outward to the audience. Her Ally is tough but insecure, which is the only reason her character would stay with Jackson Maine, but unfortunately there was little exploration otherwise.



On the Road to 'A Star is Born'
Photo credit: Warner Bros.

The supporting players... Sam Elliott as Maine's "handler," Dave Chapelle as an awkwardly-placed-in-the-story friend and Clay as Ally's father, were all so weakly drawn that any of them could have been excised from the film and it still would have felt the same. The screenplay, for example, directly steals from a earlier romantic drama called "Return to Me" (2000) by having Ally's Dad preside over a group of old men and fellow limo drivers, who served as a sort of Greek Chorus. It was a narrative point as filler, and added nothing to the relationship theme, which again needed more depth.

But the star-that-is-born is Gaga, and both her songs and acting atmosphere are a much needed salve for the shallow story. She rose above this one, and in essence it was a perfect way to challenge herself as an actor. As was once said of Frank Sinatra, "it's Lady Gaga's world, we only live in it."

"A Star is Born" opens everywhere on October 5th. Featuring Lady Gaga, Bradley Cooper, Sam Elliott, Andrew Dice Clay and Dave Chapelle. Screenplay adapted by Bradley Cooper, Eric Roth and Will Fetters. Directed by Bradley Cooper. Rated "R"



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