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Some Like It Hot (Billy Wilder, 1959), One For The Ages

Description

Reviewed by Larry Gleeson during the annual TCM 31 Days of Oscar

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Some Like it Hot (1959), directed, co-written, and produced by Billy Wilder, a seven-time Oscar winner (with 21 Oscar nominations). Wilder is considered one the most brilliant and versatile filmmakers of the Classical Hollywood Era. His classic film noir. *Double Indemnity* (1944), won Wilder his first Oscar for Best Director. On the set of *Some Like It Hot*, Wilder had his hands full with Marilyn Monroe, a method actor with a painstakingly slow process. The two had worked together one time previously on *The Seven Year Itch* (1955). Wilder vowed to never work with Monroe again after *Some Like It Hot*. Tragically, Monroe would only complete one more film before her untimely passing, *The Misfits* (1961). Regardless, the pair, along with a top-notch cast including Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis, hit a home run with *Some Like It Hot*, widely regarded as one of the greatest films of all time.

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The narrative revolves around two musicians, Joe (Tony Curtis) and Jerry (Jack Lemon), who witness a mobster murder, and flee Chicago, Illinois, disguised as women in an all-female band, Sweet Sueâ??s Society Syncopators. As the two are waiting to board the train, Marilyn Monroeâ??s character, Sugar Cane, passes the two on the train platform. In a classical male gaze, the camera shifts from a forty-five-degree angle of the two actors, dressed in drag, to their eye line, a full-on, direct shot of Sugar Caneâ??s derriere. Adding two steam blasts as Sugar walks and the two men following her swinging gait seems a reference the title of the film. A good portion of the film is set on the moving train with some of the filmâ??s most comedic moments.

Life is looking up for Joe, now known as Josephine, and Jerry, now known as Daphne. Both characters receive more attention as women than is comfortable for either. Yet, both Curtis and Lemmon pull it off with impeccable comedic timing. Josephine and Daphne are both smitten with Sugar Cane. Josephine has a young bell hop hitting are her for the remainder of the film. Daphne eventually acquiesces and plays a wingman to Curtisâ??s pursuit of Sugar. Josephine is passing himself off to Sugar as the heir to Shell Oil. A wrench is thrown into their plans, however, when the mobsters arrive for a meeting. Another gangland killing occurs forcing Shell, Jr., and Daphne to flee with Osgood. Sugar makes it into the boat as Osgood heads out to his parked yacht in the Miami harbor. Joe E. Brown, as millionaire, Osgood Fielding III, is relentless in his pursuit of Daphne. While Daphne continuously objects, Osgood overcomes the objections and gets â??the girlâ?• in the end. Shell, Jr reveals himself as Joe and wins over Sugar.

Some like It Hot was originally imagined as a star vehicle for Tony Curtis as Joe, the struggling saxophonist and dogged ladiesâ?? man. However, when Marilyn Monroe was brought in, Wilder crafted the role of Sugar Cane to fit Monroeâ??s persona. As wonderful and zany as the film is, the lone Oscar was for Best Costume Design (Orr Kelly), out of its six nominations. While at the Seminole Ritz Carlton, Sugar performs, â??I Want To Be Loved By Youâ?• in the most extravagant and titillating dress. The Collection of Motion Picture Costume Design describes the dress as:

> â??Fitted 1920â??s style dress, with sheer fabric from the bust up, flesh colored silk from bust down with extremely low cut back, beaded heavily at bust area, ornamented with gold sequins in a wash pattern on silk areas with clear bead tassels, heart shaped cut on at rear surrounded by red beads and drops; swans down stole attached to chiffon backing.â?•

With a run time of two hours and one minute*, Some Like It Hot* is a roller coaster ride from start to finish. Lemmon is new and fresh. Curtis is polished and debonair. And Marilyn Monroe is Marilyn Monroeâ?¦..at her finest. Very highly recommended.

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