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Maestro Movie Review: Bradley Cooper Delivers a Brilliant Performance and Biopic

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[Mumbai, India](#)

Maestro movie review: Bradley Cooper shines bright in the musical biopic.

Maestro (U/A)

4.5/5

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20 December 2023 | English

2 hrs 09 mins | Musical biopic

Starring: Bradley Cooper and Carey Mulligan

Director: Bradley Cooper

Platform: Netflix

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Maestro Movie Review: Bradley Cooper leaves 'A Star Is Born' far behind with his new film, Maestro.

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Sometimes, biopics can be awfully boring and downright predictable. But the Bradley Cooper-helmed Maestro, in which he essays the lead, is a fascinating piece of work that surpasses his earlier film, A Star is Born, by many, many miles. The first half in black-and-white is so powerful that it took my breath away, and this deals with him as the legendary American composer and conductor (also a pianist), Leonard Bernstein, coming to grips with his amazing talent and also his bi-sexuality.

He is not just a prodigy, but a prankster and seducer, but above all a very warm human being. It is said that he gave a new meaning to the word gay. He was honest enough to do that in times when homosexuality even in New York was not quite acceptable. But the film treats this as a mere diversion; what it concentrates on is his great reverence for music. He is a great conductor of the classics and a soul-stirring composer of Broadway musicals like On the Waterfront. A prosthetic nose that Cooper carries with admirable ease in such a way that it becomes a real part of him; he disappears into Bernstein's soul and spirit.

Maestro opens with an aging Leonard or Lenny playing the piano. This is in colour. A sad tune emerges out of it, and he says he misses his wife, Felicia Montealegre (Carey Mulligan, whose performance as a woman deeply in love and later as one who is disappointed and distressed is simply unforgettable). The two were soulmates. The film then quickly turns into black-and-white, and we see how on November 14, 1943, a 25-year-old Bernstein (just an assistant conductor then) is urgently called to conduct an orchestra without any rehearsal. The orchestra's guest conductor has fallen, and the doors of opportunity and good luck open for the young man. There is no looking back for him after the renowned Carnegie Hall performance. A star is born here, and this time the star is him, and not Ally or Lady Gaga.

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Later, at a party thrown by his sister, he meets Felicia and the two hit it off, and as one writer quipped, like a “Hollywood screwball comedy”. Although she is extremely understanding about his gay tendencies and accepts them with her eyes open, he seems somewhat dissatisfied. Is it guilt? Or, is it his desire to achieve so many things all at once? We would never know, and the movie does not make any effort to clarify this. We are never told about how she feels about his dual life.

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However, such an arrangement can merely have a limited run, as we all know. He is heady with his stardom, and gets “sloppy”. She sinks into depression, and their three children can do little about this. Jealousy and possessiveness take hold of their relationship, and it spirals downward. The man who began with devotion to her passes through a period of turmoil and uncertainty. Finally, it is love that he feels for her, absolute love.

Maestro is one of the very few films that I saw this year which made me feel a sense of immense satisfaction. It premiered in Venice in September and is now on Netflix. A must-watch for those who feel cinema transcends the boundaries of mere entertainment.

About the Author

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