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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Surfing Through "A Star Is Born" (1954)

Saw the Judy Garland/James Mason *A Star Is Born* for the first time this weekend with fellow IRA member Andy. Thoroughly enjoyed it, though I was thrown off by the finale -- for some reason, I had it in my head that Garland would reprise "The Man That Got Away," so when she finished with the clearly iconic line "I'm Mrs. Norman Maine," I was slightly let-down. The "rehearsal" numbers were great, especially the late night club "Man" and the solo performance for her husband in their living room. But the full production numbers looked pretty tacky, whether it was the big finale of the movie she filmed that we saw at a preview or the one she was filming wearing the ugliest, most unappealing costume imaginable. (Very few of her costumes for the roles she was playing were attractive.) But great work from Garland and Mason. Other than the late night version of "The Man That Got Away," Garland's peak for me was when she is on the set, broken down over her husband but immediately turns it on for a closeup. For Mason, it was the scene where he signs for a package and the once-famous actor isn't even recognized by the delivery person. With his back to us, Mason shows Norman breaking down silently. Andy insists feminists in the 70s decried the finale (imagining that Garland was being the dutiful little wife and giving up her identity, rather than simply making a nice gesture to the man she loved that just killed himself), but that's too silly to even think about. Now I have to check out New York, New York to watch Liza follow in her momma's footsteps. *** 1/2 (out of 4)

P.S. And as an embarrassing aside, Andy and I argued over the final year that The Carol Burnett Show ran on CBS. He said it was 1978, the year after The Mary Tyler Moore Show ended. I thought he was crazy and that it lasted into the early 80s. He was absolutely right.

POSTED BY MICHAEL IN NEW YORK AT 1:15 PM



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