

Film Review

MAY 1983 35p

**IT'S DUSTIN
HOFFWOMAN
IN 'TOOTSIE'**

**... AND IT'S
HIGHWAYWOMAN
FAYE** in 'The Wicked Lady'



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DUSTIN HOFFMAN IS QUITE A GAL IN

'Tootsie'

playing a fun-to-watch role worthy of an Oscar.

Considering that Dustin Hoffman has been a leading film actor for some sixteen years, it's surprising that he's been on our front cover only once before. Even then it was only in a small way. And now that we're finally giving him the VIP treatment to celebrate the release of his new film *Tootsie*, it's ironical that he's barely recognisable. You could almost call him our "cover girl". Yes, under the wig and make-up and female attire lurks the very masculine Mr Hoffman.

So what's he doing in drag? A couple of incidents in the film lead up to that bold move. He plays a New York actor Michael Dorsey who, being unemployed, has turned to coaching for a living. After preparing his girlfriend Sandy (Teri Garr) for an audition for a tv soap opera, he is livid to learn that she has been rejected without even being asked to read. Hoping to help her by asking to see a star of the show whom he knows,



Left: Dorsey (Dustin Hoffman) has impressed Julie (Jessica Lange) as a woman but she thinks less of him out of drag. Above: Dorsey is annoyed to learn that his friend Sandy (Teri Garr) has failed an audition for a tv series.

Dorsey is told that the man has left to prepare for a Broadway play. Dorsey storms into his agent's office, demanding to know why he hasn't been informed about the role in the play, only to be told that no one wants him — he has a reputation for being difficult to work with.

This gets Dorsey's dander up. He'll get an acting job by fair means or foul. And he succeeds, though the means could not be called fair. He dresses as a woman and, calling himself Dorothy Michaels, applies for the role his girlfriend has been refused — and gets it. "She" has just the right forceful qualities to play a hospital administrator, a matronly type.

"Dorothy" is so successful that the ratings of the show rocket, fan mail pours in and "she" finds "herself" on the cover of leading magazines. But naturally there's a price to pay for this daring deception — more than one, in fact.

The matter of posing as a female in front of the tv people is complicated by the fact that Dorsey (alias "Dorothy") develops a yen for the star of the show, Julie (Jessica Lange). And Julie likes "Dorothy", too, treating "her" as a confidant. "Dorothy" accepts an invitation to spend a weekend with Julie at her father's farm — which puts "Dorothy" in the tricky position of having to share a bed with Julie. "Dorothy" is able to stifle "her" amorous feelings on this occasion, but not on a later one at Julie's apartment. When "Dorothy" makes a move to kiss Julie on the mouth, Julie backs away, suspecting that "Dorothy" is a lesbian. "Dorothy" makes matters worse by saying "You ought to see me with my clothes off", then decides this isn't the time to reveal his true identity.

To make matters worse and funnier, Julie's widower father (Charles Durning) falls for "Dorothy" and gives "her" a ring to indicate his intentions.

And to make matters even worse and even funnier, Dorsey's transvestism comes between him and Sandy. Spying on his apartment to try to find out where he keeps disappearing to, Sandy sees him enter the building as "Dorothy" whom she mistakes for a woman who's keeping company with Dorsey. When Sandy finds him with a box of chocolates containing greetings signed by "Les" (Julie's father), Sandy begins to suspect that Dorsey is gay.

A pretty pickle he's got himself into! When "Dorothy's" tv contract is to be renewed for a year, Dorsey becomes desperate for a way out of his transvestism trap.

Tootsie, a Columbia picture, received no fewer than ten Oscar nominations, some-

thing rarely achieved. The major ones were for Best Picture, Best Actor (Hoffman), Best Director (Sydney Pollack), Best Supporting Actress (Jessica Lange and Teri Garr), Best Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen (Larry Gelbart and Murray Schisgal) and Best Original Song ("Tootsie" with lyrics by Alan and Marilyn Bergman and music by Dave Grusin). Actual winners will have been announced on April 11, the day this issue of *Film Review* goes on sale.

Dustin Hoffman (who has been nominated for an Oscar on four previous occasions and won the award three years ago for his last film, *Kramer vs Kramer*), gives possibly his best performance as "Tootsie". His female impersonation is in no ways embarrassing, partly because the disguise is so feminine that Hoffman is hardly recognizable beneath it, and partly because the female he's portraying is not grotesque but is quite likeable. Hoffman's performance will go a long way to making drag respectable. (In the Oscar nominations he's competing with Ben Kingsley (*Gandhi*), Paul Newman (*The Verdict*), Jack Lemmon (*Missing*) and Peter O'Toole (*My Favourite Year*).

Ms Lange, too, fully deserves her Oscar nomination — although whether it is fair to call hers a *supporting* role is a matter for debate. She displays a delightful feminine personality and a fine sense of comedy. It's in marked contrast to her dramatic performance in *Frances* for which she got another Oscar nomination, this time for Best Actress — *leading* actress, that is. For her *Tootsie* Best Supporting Actress nomination she's in competition with Teri Garr (same film), Kim Stanley (*Frances*), Glenn Close (*The World According to Garp*) and Lesley Ann Warren (*Victor/Victoria*).

Other fine support in *Tootsie* comes from Dabney Coleman as the director of the tv



"Dorothy" puts lecherous actor John Van Horn (George Gaynes) in his place.

soap opera, George Gaynes as the lecherous head doctor in the tv show, Charles Durning as Jessica Lange's father who falls for "Dorothy", and Doris Belack as a Lotte Lenya-type tv producer. The role of Hoffman's agent, who tells his client he's in need of therapy, is filled with distinction by Sydney Pollack who is also the film's director-producer.

Tootsie has one of the funniest scripts in years, obviously written by people sympathetic with the trials and tribulations of struggling actors in New York.

At a preview it was good to hear so much loud, long laughter. This will surely set the pattern for screenings around the country, repeating the tremendous reception the film has had in America. It is good to be part of a big audience that is totally immersed in its appreciation of a film, the same experience we've all had with *E.T.* And what will go very much in *Tootsie's* favour is the fact that it has a PG Certificate, indicating that there's nothing likely to cause embarrassment. □



Left: "Dorothy" (dangerously unbuttoned at the neck) takes a phone call that leads to one of the many complications in posing as a woman.

Below: "Dorothy" is wined, dined and wooed by Julie's father (Charles Durning), another person who is fooled by the disguise.



Below: "Dorothy" (Dorsey in disguise) gets a friendly kiss from unsuspecting Julie.

He's Tootsie... She's Dustin Hoffman



Desperate,
he
took
a
female
role
and
became
a
star.



If only he could tell the woman he loves.

DUSTIN HOFFMAN
Tootsie PG

COLUMBIA PICTURES Presents a MIRAGE/PUNCH Production a SYDNEY POLLACK Film
DUSTIN HOFFMAN JESSICA LANGE TERI GARR in **"TOOTSIE"**
Executive Producer **CHARLES EVANS** Story by **DON MCGUIRE** and **LARRY GELBART** Screenplay by **LARRY GELBART** and **MURRAY SCHISGAL**
Music by **DAVE GRUSIN** Original Songs / Lyrics by **ALAN & MARILYN BERGMAN** Director of **OWEN ROIZMAN, A.S.C.**
Produced by **SYDNEY POLLACK** and **DICK RICHARDS** Directed by **SYDNEY POLLACK**

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