



When Warner Bros. announced that it would be releasing *A Star Is Born* – a remake of the 1976 film of the same name starring Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson, which was a remake of the 1954 feature starring Judy Garland and James Mason, which was itself a remake (yes, really!) of the 1937 *A Star Is Born* starring Janet Gaynor and Fredric March – a lot of people asked, "Why do we need another one of those?"

Apparently the answer was, "Because Bradley Cooper is a freakin' TALENTED mofo, and it'll totes be worth it."

It is.

Worth it, I mean.

I went into *A Star Is Born* with no expectations whatsoever. Although I had a general idea of what it was about, I had not seen the three previous iterations at the time (I have since seen the 1937 version). So, I basically walked in blind, and I'm really glad I did. Not only did I not have comparisons in my head while watching, I also got to be surprised by the narrative as it unfolded.

Here's what makes this version of *A Star Is Born* so good:

### **The music is fantastic.**

I can only think of one song in the whole movie I didn't care for, which is saying a lot considering how much music is in the film. It's the kind of movie that makes you want to go home and add the whole soundtrack to your Spotify list (which is pretty much what I did).

There are catchy pop songs, moody country songs, soulful blues & rock fusions that contain some incredible guitar work. The music isn't just part of the background; it's the foundation that the entire movie rests on.

The music also has a passionate, visceral dynamic because Cooper, Lady Gaga, and the musicians recorded their concert performances live on stage, rather than in a studio. With the concert sound captured in front of an audience, and the camera in the midst of the action, Cooper gives filmgoers an intimate part in the action.

### **Bradley Cooper is fantastic.**

Not only is this probably Cooper's best performance to date, the actor also cowrote the screenplay, directed the film, cowrote his character's songs (with Willie Nelson's son, Lukas), sang all his songs, and learned to play both the piano and guitar, so he could perform all his own music on screen.

I first encountered Cooper way, way back when I binge watched J.J. Abrams' *Alias* on DVD (this was pre-streaming, folks!). In the first two seasons of *Alias*, Cooper played a sweet, romantic, somewhat hapless journalist, and I adored his character.

Even though he left the show in the second season, I recognized him immediately when I next saw him in *Hangover*, although at the time, I didn't know his name. I loved seeing him in such a different role and hit up IMDb to find out where else I could see his work, only to find that he'd been acting regularly since 1999 and just hadn't been on my radar!

He's certainly been on my (and the world's) radar since! And, in case it wasn't evident before, *A Star Is Born* clearly proves he's not just a pretty face. The man has mad skills, and I can't wait to see what he does next (perhaps it will be a series of acceptance speeches!).

### **Lady Gaga is fantastic.**

Since my baby sister introduced me to her videos at a Christmas get-together back when Lady Gaga was just emerging as a star, I've had no strong feelings about her (Lady Gaga, not my baby sister). I enjoy some of her songs. I find her stage persona fun and admire her courage. I think her voice is beautiful and far more versatile than her pop career has traditionally demonstrated. But I wouldn't call myself a fan.

So, when she was cast as the lead in *A Star Is Born*, I think I was one of the few who didn't immediately react with either a "Hooray, this is going to be awesome!" or an "OMG, what a terrible choice; she's gonna ruin that movie." Honestly, I didn't give it much thought at all.

Having seen the movie, I can now say that her acting talents are as impressive as her vocal range. She completely disappears into her character and becomes Ally – not Lady Gaga playing Ally. She's great from beginning to end, and I look forward to seeing her on the screen again.

**The script is fantastic.**

How often do you hear me say THAT?

Cooper manages to blend elements of the 1937 film (and possibly the '54 and '76 versions as well - having not seen them, I cannot say) into a thoroughly modern story that is impossible not to become emotionally invested in. The characters are well developed, the story moves at a good pace (although I felt it slowed down just a bit in the second half of the second act), the balance between music performances and drama is masterful, and the third act delivers.

It's one hell of a screenplay.

Final Grade: A