

The Danville News
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Friday, February 4, 2011
“The King’s Speech”
Word Count: 750

You cannot correctly chide me for joining the accolade bandwagon. Why? Because my wife has been eager to view this movie ever since our film-wise daughter shrieked about it last spring. You should note that ever since “Pride and Prejudice,” “Shakespeare in Love,” and “Love Actually,” anything that features Colin Firth sets off romance buzzers among the estrogen bearers in my household.

Since November my wife has rustled the newspapers out of my hands to check the listings. My daughter set up electronic markers on the computer to trigger bells and whistles should any movie theatre in the region book it. After months of impatient waiting and longing, they finally located a theatre in Wilkes Barre that was going to show it. She scheduled a day off from work. Plans were set for a drive to the matinee. Lucky for me a local theatre (they jumping on the profit bandwagon) decided to show it.

I’m a sensitive kind of guy, so sure, I went along. It doesn’t hurt to make points with the wife. Besides, ever since his performance in “Fever Pitch,” I too find myself strangely attracted to dear Colin.

So there we were, a good half hour early to beat the massive crowd that surely would make good seating in the theatre difficult to find. A half hour and one minute later, the crowd consisted of twelve of us. We were the youngest, and that’s not saying much.

I do commend the movie, “The King’s Speech.” I add how I recommend that you see it soon. Since it lacks gratuitous sex and violence, it probably won’t last long in the theatre. Since it is clever, witty, and well-written – a verbal movie bereft of action, gore, fast cars -- it probably won’t be too popular. Yes, I’m a snob.

Because it’s a movie about true history, it is a movie for our times. Plus the male characters wear really great suits. There’s something about the 1930 that registers with me. It might explain my fondness for vests, pocket-watches, and fedoras. But even if you lean more toward Superbowl sweat-suit than pin-stripe, it’s a movie worth seeing. It’s a movie with weight. Amidst so much today that is trivial and trite, contrived and pathetic, it’s a movie that carries a voice. Which makes sense. The movie is all about having a voice, finding your voice.

The movie focuses in on how Bertie, the Duke of York, rose to do what had to be done in trying times. His brother, King Edward, abdicates the throne. Publicly, the reason given was his illicit love affair with Mrs. Simpson of Baltimore, twice divorced. Not Queen material. There’s an exquisite moment at a crass party hosted by King Edward and his paramour when she looks to the King, taps her empty champagne glass, and sends him hustling off for another bottle. What a lap dog.

Because we have historical insider knowledge, King Edward was more than a lap dog to just her. London in the 1930's was the world of my wife's mother, she the daughter of a British General. Elaine's mother also was connected with British Intelligence. Over here, the press pushed the story-book romance and how the King abdicated for 'the love of his life.' Ugh. There's a tired adolescent phrase. Behind the scenes throughout London, what was commonly whispered was how King Edward admired Hitler, how Mrs. Simpson likely spied for Nazi Germany.

But I digress from the real story of Bertie, the accidental king. He's no lap dog. He's a man who acts the man. While his brother scoots off with his mistress and waits out the war in the luxury of the Bahamas, Bertie must rise to do his duty and be the King, his voice heartening his people against the chilling oratory of Hitler.

As I said, it's a movie for our times. Perhaps this also explains why his movie is so admired. We hunger for substance.

The movie tells how two persons in particular helped him realize his potential. Here is the movie's soul. Two people believed in him. It is easy to discard. It takes commitment to love, teach, befriend.

Bertie, who stammered and stuttered most embarrassingly, overcame his defect. He did so with bravery and perseverance, and learnt to deliver a speech that rallied a nation at war. The King's speech. The defeat of social evils begins with us facing our personal demons.

What is the first line defense against adversity? It is our character.