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TCM THIS MONTH



SPOTLIGHT

Friday, December 7, 2007 9:45 AM

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The Glass Bottom Boat

Looking for a madcap romp complete with Cold War intrigue? Take a ride on **The Glass Bottom Boat** (1966) with Doris Day and Rod Taylor. Brought to you by director Frank Tashlin, famous for his send-ups of '50s and '60s mass culture, who delivers spy thriller parodies, romance and even a few musical numbers in this screwball comedy, which includes a distinctly comedic supporting cast. Doris Day plays a widow who has just started a new job in public relations at a space laboratory that develops inventions by engineering wizard Rod Taylor. Day moonlights as a mermaid for her dad's Catalina glass bottom boat tour business and, as the film opens, is literally hooked by Taylor, little knowing that he's her new boss. Taylor sets his sights on the dizzy but wholesome blond and the stage is set for mistaken identities galore, most of them set in motion by those protecting Taylor's top-secret project, known as Gismo. They become certain that Day's mysterious calls to a certain Vladimir (her dog), and other misinterpreted behavior, are proof she's a secret agent. Meanwhile, Doris sings, Rod falls hard, and the Soviets ultimately miss the boat in this classic mid-sixties romp.

It is perhaps no wonder that the French, the first (the only?) ones on the planet to fully embrace Jerry Lewis would also be the premiere filmgoers to herald Frank Tashlin as a master of the absurd, while Americans remained, during his lifetime, largely unsure what to make of him. Tashlin and Lewis made eight pictures together (beginning with *Artists and Models*, 1955) and it's still not known whether Dom DeLuise's performance in **The Glass Bottom Boat** (his second-ever film appearance) as a bumbling informant, was inspired by Lewis or not, even though it's very close to the type of wacky characters Lewis played in Tashlin's comedies. Tashlin, of course, is known for his bigger-than-life cartoon-like style (especially visible in films like *The Girl Can't Help It*, 1956 and *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*, 1957), a happy hangover from Tashlin's beginnings as a successful animator, working alongside luminary Tex Avery. And, as in the world of cartoons, Tashlin's live-action work is often devoted to characters with rubbery faces and

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Guest Programmer: Brian Dennehy - 11/28

A veteran stage, film and TV actor for more than thirty years, Brian Dennehy gets to play favorites for a change in a 4-film lineup that includes James Mason in **Odd Man Out** (1947) and Albert Finney in **Saturday Night and Sunday Morning** (1961).

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Volume 2 on DVD

A 5-disc set showcasing great actresses in key roles; among them are Susan Hayward as real-life singer Lillian Roth in **I'll Cry Tomorrow** (1955), Candice Bergen & Jacqueline Bisset as best friends and rivals in **Rich and Famous** (1981) and 3 more.

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plot lines that require significant suspension of disbelief.

Tashlin's hand-picked supporting cast for **The Glass Bottom Boat** is a veritable who's who of comic character actors: George Tobias and Alice Pearce reprise their roles as the nosey neighbors from *Bewitched*, of which they'd already been a successful part for several seasons; John McGiver (*The Patty Duke Show*) is the sour-faced corporate executive; Edward Andrews (*Tea and Sympathy*, 1956) as the randy General; Paul Lynde (*Bye Bye Birdie*, 1963) as the over-zealous security guard; and Dick Martin (*Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*) is perfect as Taylor's opportunistic and womanizing co-worker. TV and radio host Arthur Godfrey plays Day's rough and ready father and delivers a musical interlude as well. Keep your eyes peeled for a most surprising cameo appearance by Robert Vaughn (*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*) as well. Australian-born Rod Taylor (*The Time Machine*, 1960) is perfectly cast as the romantic lead and straight man amid this mayhem and is convincing, as usual, as the smart and debonair recipient of Day's ire and affection.

Gadgets are another key part of Tashlin's cast, and **The Glass Bottom Boat** has a number of them -- from the anti-gravity invention known as Gismo, to a kitchen with every space-age gimmick imaginable, including a push-button, self-cleaning eggbeater and a mess-hating robot that is activated when anything touches the floor (yes, that goes for people too).

At the time, reviews of **The Glass Bottom Boat** suggested that Tashlin brought out a new quality in his star Doris Day and raised her comedic skills to new heights. The movie was Day and Tashlin's first film together and they would go on to collaborate on *Caprice* (1967) the following year, which Day wanted to turn down, but was already committed to it by her husband/manager Marty Melcher. In 1968, at the time of Melcher's death, Day discovered that he had mismanaged or embezzled all of her career earnings and she was flat broke. Day bounced back with *The Doris Day Show*, and eventually was awarded damages from her former lawyer, who had helped Melcher "manage" her business.

Producer: Martin Melcher, Everett Freeman

Director: Frank Tashlin

Screenplay: Everett Freeman

Art Direction: Edward C. Carfagno, George W. Davis

Cinematography: Leon Shamroy

Editing: John McSweeney, Jr.

Music: Frank De Vol

Cast: Doris Day (Jennifer Nelson), Rod Taylor (Bruce Templeton), Arthur Godfrey (Axel Nordstrom), John McGiver (Ralph Goodwin), Paul Lynde (Homer Cripps).

C-111m. Letterboxed. Closed captioning. Descriptive Video.

by Emily Soares



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