

Film review : A Star Is Born

A Star Is Born

Direction: Bradley Cooper

Screenplay: Bradley Cooper, Will Fetters, Eric Roth

Cast: Bradley Cooper, Lady Gaga, Dave Chappelle, Sam Elliott

Length: 135 minutes

Rating: 15

Just over 80 years ago, 'A Star Is Born', a romantic drama with Janet Gaynor and Frederic March, won one golden statuette, for writers Robert Carson and William A. Wellman, at the tenth Academy Awards in 1938.

Since then, this Oscar winning original story (that still holds a 100% approval rating on review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes) has already been adapted three times into musical films. A remake in 1954, with Judy Garland and James Mason, won two Golden Globes, and a second version in 1976, with Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson won one Oscar, three Grammys and five Golden Globes. With such a back catalogue of critical acclaim and awards success, this third reprise has big acts to follow.

So far the talent points in the right direction. Bradley Cooper is a four-time Oscar nominee and Lady Gaga has won six Grammys and one Golden Globe.



Still from the film courtesy of
Warner Bros

And I can report, this film not so much as follows them, but blazes its own dynamic trajectory within the template of the tale. Where the first two films were set behind the scenes of the film industry, the second two take place within the world of music. All four follow the relationship between two talented entertainers, a man that has achieved success and a woman yet to be discovered, and what happens to that relationship when one career declines and the other ascends.

We follow alcoholic and drug-addicted rock star Jackson Maine (Cooper), complete with a voice, deep and raspy, of the definitive live touring veteran, and a part restaurant kitchen worker part jaded nightclub performer Ally (Gaga), refreshingly understanding of the reality that attaining any success in show business is almost impossible, regardless of obvious talent. Both deliver surprisingly natural performances, inhabiting their characters with an ease and freedom that reflects a film that one forgets is the work of a first time director.

While the 1976 film feels more like a music video, this remake is wonderfully cinematic with glowing cinematography and rocking soundtrack recapturing traditional escapism. While that previous retelling introduces us to the two main characters separately, this film very cleverly splices the two lives simultaneously from the very beginning. Similar to 'La La Land', another quality musical production told with the same heart-breaking honesty as here, we watch two talented people in love striving to find a balance between fulfilling their artistic dreams and their love for each other.

'A Star Is Born' is a classic love story that unfolds in an eternal summer with the heat of passion bleeding of the screen, from the stage and through the song-writing. Both epic in physical scale and intimate in emotional connection, the

mesmerisingly confident vocal performances could only be delivered live, à la Les Misérables. Unlike some musical films, the soundtrack never overpowers the story, allowing the comedy to break through. While the rocking anthems are an arresting experience, shaking the auditorium and enveloping the audience in vibrant colour mirages, they have a distinctive weary country flavour among the beautiful ballads and pop compositions.

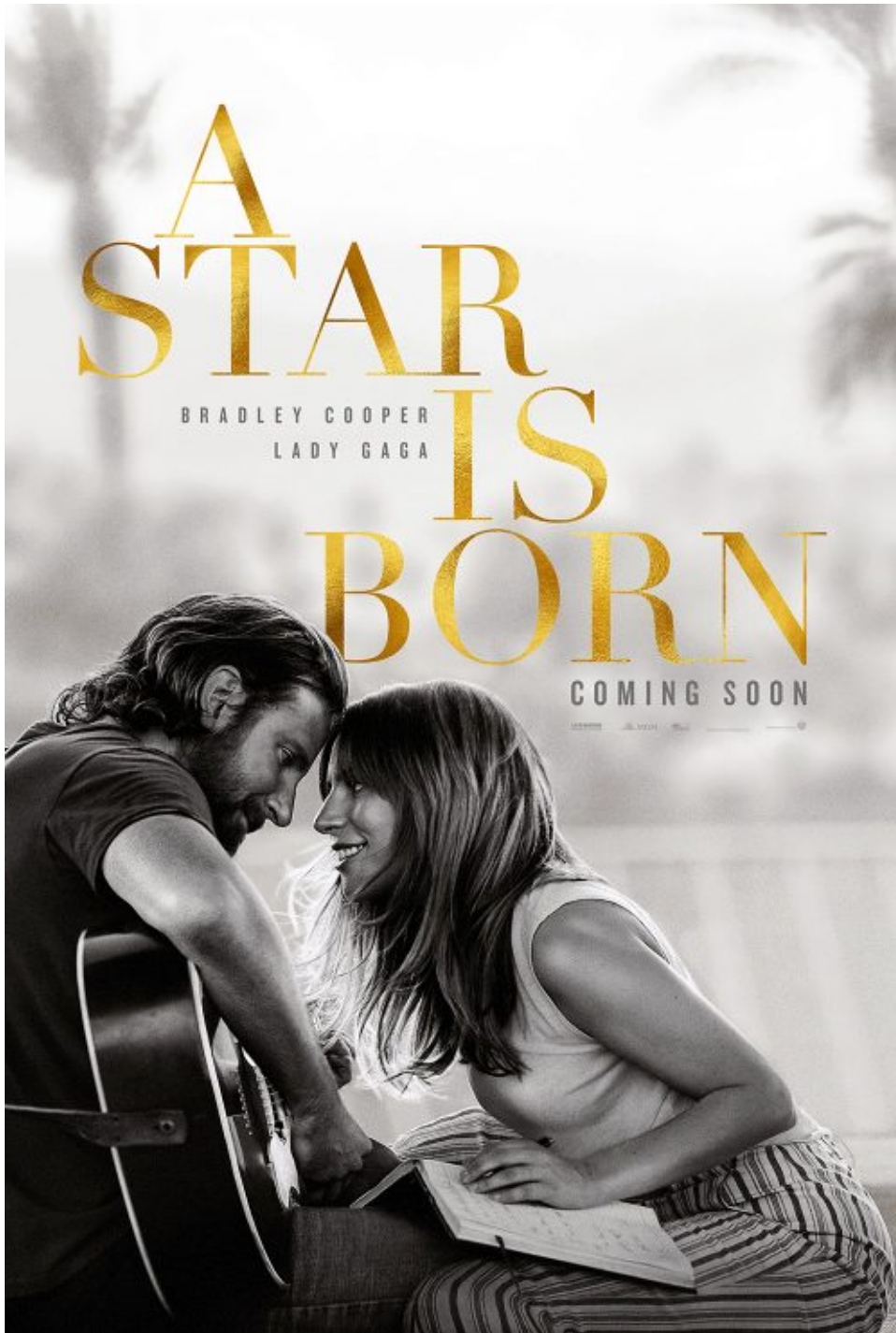
In his directorial debut, Cooper has crafted a rapturously romantic and dramatic musical, updating an age old story for this century that can more than hold its own against comparative competition. If the back catalogue is to be believed, then the first 'A Star Is Born' for more than four decades should be a major awards season contender. Expect career success in real life at the Oscars, Grammys, BAFTAs and Golden Globes next year.

We know both characters finish the film at opposite ends of the career spectrum from whence they started, but does their love story continue?

'A Star Is Born' (2018) is in cinemas now.

8/10

'A Star Is Born' (1976) is currently available on Netflix.



Film poster courtesy of Warner Bros