

Opportunity Knocks ★★½

Year of Release: 1990

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: See It

In *Opportunity Knocks*, Dana Carvey takes a stale story line and turns it into an entertaining vehicle for his comic charm. The movie relies on the oldest comedy gimmick in the book: the case of mistaken identity. Carvey plays a low-life con man who is mistaken for a wealthy, Harvard-educated business wizard. It's the perfect opportunity for a major con. He suckers manufacturing tycoon Robert Loggia into giving him a job. He suckers gorgeous Julia Campbell into falling in love with him. His con is so good he even suckers himself. Carvey forgets that he's really a no-good bum only *pretending* to be a suave, sophisticated yuppie.

Opportunity Knocks is altogether clichéd and implausible. But that doesn't stop the appealing cast from pulling the movie out of the gutter by its bootstraps. The film is a showcase for Carvey's comic genius. It allows him to be wild and goofy and to do impressions, everyone from George Bush to a gas company inspector. Carvey is so endearing and has so much boyish charm that it's impossible not to root for him during his charades.

Loggia is as charismatic as ever as the CEO of a

company which markets blow-dryers for public rest rooms. He hopes that Carvey can revive the company's sagging sales. Campbell makes an impressive film debut as Carvey's love-interest, Loggia's fiercely independent and intellectual daughter. Milo O'shea is in fine form as Carvey's uncle and mentor, a retired con man.

In fact, all of the characters and actors in the film are captivating, with only two notable exceptions. Todd Graff has the thankless task of playing Carvey's dumb sidekick, an annoying character who is totally irrelevant to the story. James Tolkan, playing a generic gangster, is part of a distracting subplot involving the Mafia.

Opportunity Knocks falls far short of director Donald Petrie's previous film, the wonderful sleeper *Mystic Pizza*. The difference, not surprisingly, lies in the writing. Alfred Uhry's screenplay for *Pizza* was subtle and profound. Mitchel Katlin and Nat Bernstein lack Uhry's grace; their screenplay for *Opportunity Knocks* is sloppy and forced, almost haphazard. Thankfully, Carvey is around to turn straw into gold.