



“The Humbling” opens with Al Pacino, (aging actor Simon Axler), leaving his dressing room and within a few minutes taking a swine dive off the stage of a Broadway stage during a production of “As You Like It.”

It seems that after many years Axler has become one with his many leading characters and is a bit confused as to which one he is....or, wants to be. Soon, those old enough to remember, are reminiscing memories of the 1947 classic written by Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon, (Yes, that Ruth Gordon of “Harold and Maude fame) “A Double Life” that earned the iconic Ronald Colman an Academy Award.

Actually, we don’t have to go that far back thanks to my choice as the best film of the year, the terrific Michael Keaton film, “Birdman.” There are glaring similarities of the two with “Birdman” thanks to great dialogue, direction and uniformly sensational acting, coming out on top.

However, that is not to diminish the combined efforts of Mr. Pacino’s outstanding talent and excellent supporting cast headed by Greta Gerwig who, once again, proves that she is one of the most interesting and highly talented actresses in Hollywood. Her performance as a multifarious young lesbian theatre professor with a longstanding crush on Axler, is perfect. Charles Grodin’s performance as Axler’s agent, achingly reminds us that, lately, we do not see him often enough.

As black comedies go, “The Humbling,” taken from the masterful Philip Roth’s book, is funnier and a bit more complex than its 1947 famous predecessor. Written by Buck Henry (The Graduate) and Michael Zebede, Barry Levinson’s pin-point eclectic direction makes “The Humbling” a must see for art film devotees. To be sure, the mainstream audience will not be going to see “The Humbling” but rather action packed, noisy, bloody, sexually permissive movie fare. Pity.

“The Humbling” is not “Birdman” but a heck of a lot better than the mediocrity being released this month and next.

**3 bagels and lots of shmear out of 4**

