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54

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I wanted to see a film about the infamous Studio 54, the hot disco nightclub in New York City that saw a heyday of stars, drugs and sex in the late '70s. How disappointed I was then when I realized this was just another coming of age story with Studio 54 as the backdrop.

We've seen this story before. Young kid from the wrong side of the tracks, or river in this case, longs to meet fellow Jersey-ite, now famous soap star, and longs to have people know his name. Shane, our studly young lead, is played by Ryan Phillippe. So, of course, he gets invited into the nightclub on his first try. See, Studio 54 was famous for not letting people in. You had to look right or dress in outrageous costumes or know someone, and then maybe you would get in. And the boredom continues as we watch our innocent young thing become the toast of the town only to eventually crash and learn his life lesson. Yawn.

This story can be interesting to watch, as in *Saturday Night Fever* meets *Boogie Nights*, the two films this one most resembles. The difference here is that this movie isn't good. It doesn't draw us in. The first time Shane enters the club, it has no excitement, no energy. This is the first film for writer and director Mark Christopher, and it shows. The direction is flaccid and dull, the screenplay uninspired and dry.

The most interesting element of this film is Mike Myers. A former Saturday Night Live cast member and star of *Wayne's World* and *Austin Powers*, Myers stretches from his reputation as a way-out comedian and brings a dark, inner sadness to his character, Steve Rubell, the owner of Studio 54. It is too bad the producers of this film didn't catch on sooner to the power of Myers' performance and capture more of the Studio 54 story.

Neve Campbell is also notable. Her storyline as the soap star who gets involved with Shane is the most interesting, but unfortunately the most underwritten, element of the screenplay.

54 should be renamed *86'd*. And that is exactly what I suggest you do with your plans to see this movie. It would be a bother to see this film, so instead don't bother.

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