

# FilmReview

## 'Bobby' Daring, Yet Lacks Complexity

Jessica Reaves  
Contributing Columnist

On the evening of June 4, 1968, many Angelenos were more interested in Dodgers pitcher Don Drysdale's attempt at a no-hitter than in the state's presidential primary or Sen. Robert Kennedy's speech before the campaign faithful. Just after midnight, the focus shifted from the ballpark to the Ambassador Hotel.

"Bobby," Emilio Estevez's directorial debut, is a kaleidoscopic, scattered, unexpectedly compelling chronicle of what happened that night.

Estevez unravels the evening through the eyes of two dozen seemingly unrelated characters — all of whom might as well be wearing sandwich boards identifying their culturally relevant role ("the Aggrieved Mexican Kitchen Worker," "the Angry Black Youth," "the Stoned Hippie" and "the Idealistic Antiwar Activist"). Needless to say, each has a different, culturally relevant reason for being at the hotel.

It's an ambitious, even audacious concept, and Estevez tries valiantly to make it work. He succeeds in capturing the excitement surrounding Kennedy's appearance, and the senator's uniting effect on otherwise disparate communi-

ties. Unfortunately, Estevez also makes a serious strategic blunder: He's so busy sanctifying the senator that he forgets to direct the actors. (Apparently most of Hollywood made the cut, and the presence of a recognizable star in every scene, done up in period costume, is not so much interesting as it is distracting.) Without a clear sense of purpose or a compelling script, most of them sit back on their heels and deliver their lines with all the conviction and energy of a wet noodle.

Elijah Wood is particularly unconvincing as a mealy-mouthed kid who's getting married to avoid being sent to Vietnam. If Wood were capable of exorcising the wide-eyed hobbit within, we might buy his desperation. Instead, he limps through his scenes with Lindsay Lohan, who plays his incongruously demure activist bride.

Wood's neutered performance is an apt metaphor for the film, which has so much potential for real power but instead succumbs to the impotence of muted sepia tones and an uncharacteristically restrained score by veteran composer Mark Isham ("Invincible" and "Miracle"). One might think it's impossible to make a movie depicting such a violent event that is completely bloodless and inert,

but apparently the trick is to weigh down the production with emotional baggage, extraneous characters and tedious story lines.

Speaking of unnecessary elements, there's not enough space to mention all the guilty parties, but Helen Hunt is utterly unsympathetic as Martin Sheen's Stepford wife, while Demi Moore's alcoholic diva appears to be channeling Joan Crawford in "Torch Song." Meanwhile, Christian Slater's kitchen boss makes racist comments, is fired and apparently gets a brain transplant, allowing him to peacefully listen to the Dodgers game with his previously detested underlings. Part of the fault for these mediocre performances lies in an overworked script charged with carrying a decade's worth of cultural baggage — but some of the acting is also highly suspect.

There are notable exceptions: Anthony Hopkins (an executive producer on the film) and Harry Belafonte are beautifully matched as two aging hotel retirees who can't seem to leave the place and whose collegial banter masks a deep wistfulness for a long-lost era. Freddy Rodriguez ("Six Feet Under") shines as kitchen worker Jose, imbuing the role with warmth, humor and, later, horror, when he re-creates one of the night's iconic images.

And then, of course, there's Bobby himself. Estevez wisely weaves photographs and footage of Kennedy into the live action, rather than cast someone in the role. The effect is bittersweet: Kennedy's

**'Bobby'**

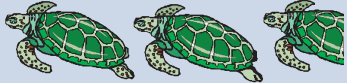
**Running Time:** 1 hour, 51 min.

**Rated R** (language, drug content and a scene of violence)

Directed by Emilio Estevez

Screenplay by Emilio Estevez

**Rating:**



(out of 4 turtles)

Visit [fandango.com](http://fandango.com) for theaters, movie times and to purchase advance tickets.



Emilio Estevez directs Christian Slater.

image and, more pointedly, his words remind us of a bygone era when politicians weren't afraid of their own intelligence, and had faith in ours.

But Estevez, in his sincere attempt to pay homage to Kennedy, elevates him to superhuman status, leaving human frailties to the supporting actors, which turns out to be a serious mistake. If Estevez had demanded a higher caliber of work from his cast, or both, he might have made a proficient, complex movie about interwoven fates and the much-discussed end of an era. Instead, he has made a daring, messy and strangely rewarding patchwork that's straining at the seams.

## ANDREW BERS...Your Bridge to Longboat Key & Beyond



2006 "Five Star Best in Client Satisfaction"  
2006 ADDY Award Direct Mail  
2005 ADDY Award Mixed Media & Website  
Top 10 Agent Website -  
Florida REALTOR® Magazine  
2005 Chairman's Circle Gold -  
Prudential Palms Realty

**OPEN HOUSE, SUNDAY, DEC. 3RD 1-4PM**

**6031 EMERALD HARBOR DRIVE**

**BIG BOAT – LONGBOAT KEY HAVEN!**

Totally remodeled, "like new," custom crafted waterfront retreat is perfectly situated for your large boat & just minutes to the open Bay & Gulf. This resort style hideaway sits on almost 1/2 acre and boasts a 180' seawall on deep water. Stunning French maple & marble flooring, ultra custom wood cabinetry & granite counters, as well as amazing indoor & outdoor chef's kitchens complement the open Island lifestyle. A spacious, stone deck with 50' lap pool & spa seamlessly adjoins the main house and overlooks the bayou. Deeded Beach access across street! MLS #330188

**Offered at \$1,875,000**

**VIRTUAL TOUR OF THIS PROPERTY**

**AndrewBers.com**

**(941) 552-5463**  
**andrew@andrewbers.com**

 Prudential  
Palms Realty

