

# Big names, disco don't help '54'

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Staff writer

## Movie Review

I feel sorry for the people involved with the predictable and juvenile tripe-on-film, "54."

At least I lost only an hour and a half of my life seeing this movie. Those involved with it probably lost a good six to seven months.

It's too bad. New York club Studio 54 seems like a '70s cultural symbol ripe with the juices out of which good drama is made.

Studio 54 sparkled as a jewel in the crown of '70s debauchery. After its opening on April 26, 1977, it became one of "the" clubs in the wild days of disco. People would line up for hours outside its doors hoping to make it onto the list of the club's co-owner Steve Rubell (played by Mike Myers). Beyond the velvet ropes lived a world of sex, drugs and disco — where restraint was the only crime.

Knowing the history of Studio 54, one expects the movie to revel in the same type of depravity. However, writer/director Mark Christopher fails miserably in his attempt to bring this lusty underworld to the big screen.

Shane O'Shea (Ryan Phillippe) is a poor kid from New Jersey pining away for the high life across the river in New York.

One night, he and his friends make the big three-mile trip to the front doors of Studio 54. After shedding his shirt to prove he's one of the "beautiful people," Shane dumps his friends for a chance to play a role in the never-ending party.

Inside, Shane makes some new friends: a busboy named Greg (Breckin Meyer) and Greg's wife Anita (Salma Hayek). A slow tumble from the pseudo-heights of revelry follows as Shane realizes drugs and lust

ain't all they're cracked up to be. Throw in an infantile crush on a TV soap star (Neve Campbell), and you have the formula for one of the most banal and predictable films of the year.

For this movie to have succeeded, the audience needed to be drawn into the intoxicating lasciviousness of Studio 54. The audience needed to become a bunch of sniveling disco addicts, entranced by the endless partying and carousing.

Then, Christopher could have dropped the bomb, tracing Shane's disillusion and rebirth.

However, like the wannabes outside the doors of Studio 54, the movie never makes it past the velvet ropes. Despite the garish wigs, gold confetti, flashing lights and blaring bass, "54" never expands past its thin shell of glamour. The biggest excitement consists of the possible sighting of Olivia

## The Facts

Title: "54"  
Stars: Ryan Phillippe, Mike Myers, Salma Hayek, Neve Campbell  
Director: Mark Christopher  
Rating: R  
Grade: D  
Five Words: Disco is lucky it's dead.

Newton-John. Please. Hold me back.

In addition to the lackluster atmosphere, the movie suffers from a serious void of acting talent. (That may be a given when you see Campbell's name listed in the credits.)

Phillippe's Shane enters the club as a shallow, vacant juvenile and leaves as a shallow, vacant juvenile (with shorter hair and a better suit, of course). He had to change in some aspect.

Myers pops up with a funny line and a semi-sadistic grin occasionally, but his overall performance feels like a strung-out Austin Powers.

Hayek and Meyer portray a little more substance as Anita and Greg, whose goals appear somewhat identifiable and viable. However, the two never receive enough screen time to adequately expose their dysfunctional relationship. Consequently, the audience is left with a gaping hole as to their history and the dynamics of their marriage.

Not to mention the generous offering of Grade A Hollywood clichés. From the corrupting power of money to the over-sentimentality for a bygone era, it reeks of stale ideas. Even the soundtrack fails to inspire.

The film ends with a voice-over by Phillippe lamenting the end of the party and the return to reality. Thank heaven for small miracles. Reality was a welcome sight after the flat illusions of "54." Even Pat Robertson is too hip to attend this party.



MATT HANEY/DN

## New Releases

Artist: Wailing Souls  
Album: Psychedelic Souls  
Label: Pow Wow Records  
Grade: C+

The cover song: An easy refuge to get people to take notice of a band that they would have probably ignored.

Examples of this are all over the place in the rock world. If you're a Nine Inch Nails fan, chances are you were tempted to buy the "Supercop" soundtrack just to hear Devo do its cover of "Head Like a Hole." For Led Zeppelin fans, there was an entire album made up of different covers of "Stairway to Heaven."

Unfortunately, this tactic has about as much staying power as the milk in your refrigerator. It may be a nice diversion, but you soon reject that song and go back to the original.

That all said, "Psychedelic Souls," the latest album from the longtime reggae group, Wailing Souls, isn't a complete failure.

Wailing Souls have been putting out reggae music since the mid '60s. Lead singer Winston "Pipe" Matthews still has a gripping voice on par with reggae legends Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, and he makes most of the songs on "Psychedelic Souls" seem like his own.

Every cover, in other words, every song (with one exception) on "Psychedelic Souls" is a mainstay for any typical classic rock radio station. They include Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," Jimi Hendrix's "May This Be Love (Waterfall)," The Who's "My Generation," and The Doors' "Love Her Madly" among more just as easily recognizable covers.

Though the '60s may be the heart of this collection, admit-

tedly there's plenty of '90s blood in the mix, too.

Sublime members Floyd "Bud" Gaugh and Eric Wilson play with the Souls in the sleepy-eyed "War Down at The Pawnshop." Fans of Sublime will no doubt want to check this release out.

The essential problem with "Psychedelic Souls" is its all-too-familiar coverage of songs. Since most of the songs on the album are songs you've heard dozens of times before, you have the tendency to isolate the album to strictly background music. With six guitarists and eight keyboardists in their current lineup, the band seems restricted, relying on the hits of the past instead of focusing on their talents.

Still, not too many people go beyond buying Bob Marley's "Legend" album when it comes to discovering reggae music.

By offering the audience covers of 11 tried-and-true songs, some listeners may take interest and discover the genre of reggae.

After listening to this album, it's easy to see that the Wailing Souls are probably hoping their name will be the first to come to mind when you sift through that section at the record store. But instead, it will probably be The Who?

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