

# The notion of gender-bender and why it succeeded in the movies some like it hot, ...

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Gender-bending films have been a success in the film industry. Part of this success is the masculinized women an audience can see in the film. These “ unruly” characters portray non-conformity in their abnormal behavior, which creates a tension that makes the audience laugh. “ We laugh at figures that do not conform, thus reinforcing the solidity of our own often precarious identities.” (2, Comedy and Representation.) This quote explains how they always intend to make the audience laugh because of their non-conforming qualities and disruptive behavior different from societies norm. They are funny because the characters do not act in the way that the audience expects them to. The audience laughs at the abnormal behavior the character portrays in the film since they would not normally act that way in their daily lives. In these films the male gender tends to bend more often than females do. Men put on a mask in order to ultimately achieve a specific goal, such as when Joe and Jerry wanted to join the female band in Some Like it Hot. The idea in which men portray woman, makes it more humorous and unanticipated because he downgrades a greater amount of societal privileges to receive the ones of a woman. The characters in these films such as Some Like it Hot, Mrs. Doubtfire, and Tootsie allow comedic expression through non-conformity in the way that they dress, their voices, body moves, looks, and their actions.

Some Like it Hot was a success in the film industry. It portrays a story of two men who dress up like women and join an all women’s jazz band en-route to Florida.

The very first act of transition from male to female is when one of the protagonists, Joe, makes the phone call to an agency that is hiring musicians and adopts a female voice. This is ironic because in the movie he is still dressed as male at that time. Jerry is the comedic relief to the movie, which is centered on a somewhat chaotic plot line. In contrast, Marilyn Monroe, playing "Sugar", portrays the "girly girl" in the movie. She illustrates the ideal feminine figure, which is a reoccurring concept in the film industry such as when Jerry says, "Will you look at that! Look how she moves! It's like Jell-O on springs. Must have some sort of built-in motor or something. I tell you, it's a whole different sex!" while Joe and Jerry do have no female attributes. They try and move like Marilyn but instead move very stiff and simply fail to do so. Joe and Jerry keep telling themselves that they are woman so they try to behave like one but they do not want to lose their masculinity. They dress up with very fancy woman coats and dresses, try to walk in heels, try to look up and walk straight like a woman does, try to talk girly, give girly advice while they are still men to Sugar, and they try not to lose their female attributes when she flirts with them. This adds comical meaning to it since we can see them trying to make an attempt to act like a woman and not doing a great job specially since they are so masculine and unattractive. The audience looks back and sees how they are treated as women in society; they are basically treated like property. It is funny because the audience can see that they are men trying to act like woman but the characters in the film don't.

In *Tootsie* the comedy comes from the irritable actor Michael Dorsey transforming into Dorothy Michaels. He is a perfectionist character and not an attractive woman; when filming him, they constantly pull the camera away from his face. He also has to put teeth, make up, and a wig, ugly clothes that cover him up and make him look older to dress as a woman with a southern accent. He makes a fool out of himself in many situations while he is transforming and brings out his male character into his female character. Such as when Sandy has caught him half naked and he said he wanted to sleep with her when he really was looking at her closet. The fact that he has to completely change from his hard, masculine, personality to a easy going feminine one makes it funny since he completely has to change his normal behavior. By dressing up as a woman it really shows him what being a woman feels like; he gets taken less seriously. They are mean to her because she is smart. This gave him more access to women helping him in his transformation. He made him learn to see a woman's point of view and made him a better person such as when he said to Julie, " I was a better man with you, as a woman... than I ever was with a woman, as a man." It is funny to the audience because they can see how he tries to be taken seriously but they take him less seriously because he is a woman, and it is funny to see him make mistakes because his manly persona gets in the way of his female costume.

In *Mrs. Doubtfire*, when Daniel transforms into an old woman working as babysitter with added comical meaning when he does things a normal woman that age would not do, such as when he says: " I'm a hip old granny,

and I hip hop!" These are non-conforming and unexpected phrases since a granny would not be dancing hip-hop. Even though he does look like a female, what makes this character so different from societies' norm is that his actions which he does are inappropriate and unrealistic for a grandmother, like playing soccer, setting a fire when he was trying to cook dinner, peeing like a man and performing more allegedly male things. He also over-exaggeratedly dresses and puts make up on to look like an old woman. This creates him to be an unattractive woman figure. Mrs. Doubtfire also uses a lot of sarcasm and loses feminine voice at times such as when a mugger tried to steal " her purse." and turning her to cursing in the male voice when she said " Back off asshole! Beat it! Broke my bag the bastard." He also develops a Scottish accent in his attempt to a female voice. In this movie the audience can see the hilarity and non-conformity of a man who goes through a divorce and dresses up as a woman to see his kids. The father has taken his traditional nurturing role to become a nanny and his authority in society is taken away. Basically the concept of a father dressing up as an old woman to see his kids and not even tell them is non-conforming which adds a comical meaning to it making the audience laugh.

In cross-dressing films, men give up certain societal standings to get what they want and because the audience knows they are men in the movie, a tension is produced that makes them laugh. When a person sees something out of the order their response is to laugh at it because they are not used to it and they don't want it to overwhelm them. Men cross-dress because they do not want to be taken seriously when woman cross dress because they do;

this creates non-conformity. Specially the idea in which men portray woman; it is more humorous and unanticipated because men downgrade a greater amount of societal privileges to get the ones of a woman. The characters in the films *Some Like it Hot*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, and *Tootsie*, basically represent the non-conforming entities that make us laugh because of their abnormal behavior and looks. Part of the hilarity is that not only they are bad at being woman, but also they make a step own form the power they have in society in order to do it which creates a non-conforming tension that makes the audience laugh.