

Green Book, a Movie Review

By Lynn Cassidy

My husband and I spent an evening at the movies last weekend. We had a pleasant surprise with the viewing of *Green Book*. The movie is based on the life of professional pianist and composer, Don Shirley and an Italian American named Tony Vallelonga. Tony was hired to drive the African American pianist on a concert tour from New York City to Alabama and back. The movie takes place in 1962, a time of extreme racial tension, and change. The characters are portrayed convincingly by Viggo Mortensen (Tony) and Mahershala Ali (Don Shirley).

The characters are as different as night and day. Tony "Lip" got his nickname, as he brags, "I am the best bull-shitter." On the other hand, Don Shirley is a gifted and highly educated musician with three PhD's. The title of the movie is based on the "Green Book" used to help navigate the hotels, restaurants and clubs allowing "negro patrons." While Don Shirley had to sleep in low-class hotels, his driver, Tony, occupied higher class accommodations. In the Deep South, it was the skill of the BS-artist that saved Mr. Shirley's musical tour several times. And it was Don Shirley's finesse and writing ability that helped Tony write more heart-felt and colorful letters to his wife back home. An unlikely friendship developed.

If you have a chance, spend an evening at the theater. I predict that *Green Book* will be one of the best pictures of the year.