



FOX SEARCHLIGHT FILMS, 2002

Jess (Parminder K. Nagra) and Joe (Jonathan Rhys-Meyer) meet after the season is over.

Soccer-Crazy Girls

This sporting life!

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM: Produced, written and directed by Gurinder Chadha. Written by Paul Mayeda Berges, Guljit Bindra and Chadha. Produced by Deepak Nayar and Chada. Executive producers, Ulrich Felsberg, Russel Fischer, Simon Frank, Zygi Kamasa, Haneet Vaswani. Music, Craig Pruess. Cinematography, Jong Lin. Editor, Justin Krish. Production design, Nick Ellis. Costumes, Ralph Hole. Starring Parminder K. Nagra, Keira Knightley and Jonathan Rhys-Meyers. With Anupam Kher, Archie Panjabi, Shaheen Khan, Juliet Stevenson, Frank Harper, Shaznay Lewis and Ameet Chana. Fox Searchlight Films, 2002. PG-13. 112 minutes.

One of England's deeply revered Soccerati, the great David Beckham, plays football for Manchester United (Man U to you). Beckham appears in this film only in photographs and archival footage, but his athletic ability inspires a young Sikh woman living in a London suburb to want to play soccer professionally. Beckham is famous for kicking a soccer ball so it heads straight for the goal, then curves away from the keeper and into the net at the last possible moment. But filmmaker Gurinder Chadha (*Bahji on the Beach*, '93; *What's Cooking*, '00) doesn't throw viewers a curve with her insider's look at an Indian family — she goes straight for the heart.

The opening credits sequence is a day-dream fantasy of Jess (Parminder K. Nagra), who loves soccer and is terrifically talented. When she walks home through the park, it's perfectly natural to be invited to play football with the young Indian men in her neighborhood. She plays better than they do. But her mom (Shaheen Khan) is getting tired of Jesminder "showing her bare legs" to men instead of thinking about marriage like her sister Pinky (Archie Panjabi). Jess's dad (Anupam Kher), who works at Heathrow Airport, was a former cricket player back in Uganda, so he's marginally more sympathetic to her plight.

Likewise, Juliette Paxton (Keira Knightley), called "Jules," would rather play soccer than shop. Her mother (Juliet Stevenson) cannot imagine why her athletically lean daughter doesn't want to wear one of the dandy new pump-up bras she'd like to buy for her. Jules's dad, Alan (Frank Harper), says if she'd rather play ball than chase boys, that's OK with him, and he encourages her by setting up a place to prac-

tice in the back yard and kicking the ball with her.

When Jules cuts through the park one day, she sees Jess playing pick-up soccer. Jules invites Jess to play with the Hounslow Harriers, a semi-pro womens soccer team. When Jess's mom finds out, she says no. But Jules encourages Jess to say she has a job and just keep playing. Deception enters the family circle and spreads. The real game is on.

If you loved *Monsoon Wedding* and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, you'll love *Bend It Like Beckham*. Although it's about the joys of soccer, it's also about family, tradition, loyalty, change and yes, a wedding. Pinky, the family shopaholic, is getting married, and wedding plans move center stage. Jess takes advantage of her parent's inattention to meet Jules and play football. And she muses about the Harrier's fine-looking Irish coach, Joe (Jonathan Rhys-Meyer), a former footballer sidelined because of injuries. Joe respectfully pushes the women to perform, but he's not allowed to date anyone he coaches.

You can see many of the plot maneuvers a mile away, but that doesn't distract from the film's simple pleasures. It's not only a feel-good, coming-of-age movie but also a sweet story with characters to love. Chadha has a really good sense of how contemporary England's ethnic diversity has warmed up and expanded the country's social life. Young Indian women may have picked up the quirks of British slang that identify them as Londoners, but they have not lost the gracious formalism of their own culture. They respect tradition (and their elders) even as they bring changes. Pinky's wedding is a celebration of family and community, and all ages have a whale of a good time.

OK, just one soccer story. The actual David Beckham, who is married to a Spice Girl, has found his own way to publicize the film, which took Britain by storm. He was seen in public wearing a headband that reads: BAND IT LIKE BECKHAM. Clever boy!

Movie opens April 11 at the Bijou. Highly recommended, thoroughly enjoyable movie.

EW

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ANGER MANAGEMENT* (PG-13) 12:35, 1:20, 2:10, 2:50, 3:20, 4:00, 4:50, 5:20, 6:30, 7:05, 7:45, 8:30, 9:10, 9:50, 10:25	THE CORE (PG-13) 12:00, 3:15, 7:15, 10:30
HOUSE OF 1000 CORPSES* (R) 2:00, 4:25, 7:30, 10:00	DREAMCATCHER (R) 12:05, 6:45
WHAT A GIRL WANTS* (PG) 1:30, 4:20, 7:40, 10:20	HEAD OF STATE (PG-13) 1:35, 4:10, 7:15, 9:45
PHONE BOOTH* (R) 12:25, 2:20, 2:45, 4:35, 5:05, 7:20, 7:55, 9:40, 10:15	THE HUNTED (R) 4:15, 9:55
A MAN APART* (R) 1:00, 3:55, 7:45, 10:30	LORD OF THE RINGS TWO TOWERS (PG-13) 4:30, 8:25
THE PIANIST (R) 12:10, 3:25, 6:50, 10:10	PIGLET'S BIG MOVIE (G) 12:15, 2:30
CHICAGO (PG-13) 12:40, 3:35, 7:00, 9:55	A VIEW FROM THE TOP (PG-13) 1:40, 7:20
BASIC (R) 3:30, 10:05	*NO PASSES OR SUPERSAVERS
BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE (PG-13) 1:05, 3:40, 7:10, 10:00	

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CATCH ME IF YOU CAN (PG-13) [1:20], 4:20, 7:30, 10:35	PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE (R) 2:45, 7:50
CHARLY (PG) [11:30], 2:00, 4:35	SPIRITED AWAY (PG) 2:00, 4:55, 7:40, 10:30
DAREDEVIL (PG-13) [11:45], 2:15, 4:45, 7:20, 9:50	THE 25TH HOUR (R) 6:55, 10:10
DARKNESS FALLS (PG-13) [12:35], 2:55, 5:25, 7:45, 10:20	THE HOT CHICK (PG-13) [12:20], 5:20, 10:25
HARRY POTTER: CHAMBER OF SECRETS (PG) [11:55], 3:20, 6:50, 10:15	WILD THORNBERRYS (PG) [12:05], 2:25, 4:40
JUNGLE BOOK 2 (G) [12:25], 2:50, 5:05, 7:05, 9:30	TWO WEEKS NOTICE (PG-13) [11:40], 2:05, 4:30, 7:00, 9:45
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A MAN APART (R) - ID REQUIRED DIG ✓ Fri. - Sun. (12:15 2:45 5:15) 7:45 10:15	
WHAT A GIRL WANTS (PG) DIG ✓ Fri. - Sun. (11:50 2:20 4:45) 7:10 9:35	
HEAD OF STATE (PG-13) DIG Fri. - Sun. (12:30 2:50 5:05) 7:25 9:40	
SPIRITED AWAY (PG) DIG Fri. - Sun. (12:45 4:30) 7:15 9:55	
THE PIANIST (R) - ID REQUIRED DIG Fri. - Sun. (12:05 3:30) 6:45 9:50	
CHICAGO (PG-13) DIG Fri. - Sun. (12:00 2:30 5:00) 7:30 10:10	

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SPIRITED AWAY (PG) Fri. - Sun. (1:10 4:00) 7:00	
A MAN APART (R) - ID REQUIRED ✓ Fri. - Sun. (1:55 4:35) 7:25 10:15	
BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE (PG-13) Fri. (2:40 5:05) 7:35 10:05	Sat. & Sun. (12:15 2:40 5:05) 7:35 10:05
WHAT A GIRL WANTS (PG) ✓ Fri. - Sun. (1:50 4:30) 7:10 9:40	
BASIC (R) - ID REQUIRED Fri. (5:25) 10:10	Sat. & Sun. (12:50 5:25) 10:10
HEAD OF STATE (PG-13) Fri. (3:00 5:20) 7:40 10:00	Sat. & Sun. (12:45 3:00 5:20) 7:40 10:00
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CHICAGO (PG-13) DIG Fri. - Sun. (12:10 2:25 4:45) 7:10 9:30	
PHONE BOOTH (R) - ID REQUIRED ★ DIG ✓ Fri. - Sun. (12:20 2:40 4:30) 7:20 9:40	
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*PIGLET'S BIG MOVIE - G (2:45) 4:40
*PHONE BOOTH - R (3:00) 4:55 6:50 [8:45]
HUNTED - R 7:00 [9:10]
CORE - PG-13 (2:30) 5:30 [8:30]

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*WHAT A GIRL WANTS - PG (1:25) 3:50 6:15 8:40
HEAD OF STATE - PG-13 6:50 9:10
AGENT CODY BANKS - PG (2:00) 4:30

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*ANGER MANAGEMENT - PG-13 (12:20 2:35) 4:50 7:05 9:20
*PHONE BOOTH - R (12:50 2:50) 4:40 6:50 9:00
CORE - PG-13 (2:20) 5:25 8:30
BASIC - R (12:40 3:00) 5:10 7:20 9:30
PIANIST - R 5:35 8:40
DREAMCATCHER - R 3:20 8:50
HUNTED - R (12:30 2:45) 4:59 7:15 9:35
BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE - PG-13 (1:40) 4:10 6:40 9:10
CHICAGO - PG-13 (WINNER 6 ACADEMY AWARDS INCLUDING BEST PICTURE) (12:55) 6:15
*PIGLET'S BIG MOVIE - G (1:50) 3:40

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