



Zoe Saldana as Catalaya

Food for Thought

Cookie-cutter *Colombiana* a meager advance for female action heroes

COLOMBIANA: Directed by Olivier Megaton. Written by Luc Besson and Robert Mark Kamen. Cinematography, Romain Lacourbas. Editor, Camille Delamarre. Music, Nathaniel Méchaly. Starring Zoe Saldana, Michael Vartan, Cliff Curtis, Lennie James, Amanda Stenberg and Callum Blue. TriStar, 2011. PG-13. 107 minutes. ★★☆☆☆

I thought about food a lot while watching *Colombiana*. I thought about food not so much because I was hungry but because my brain seemed to need something to think about, and the moving pictures on the screen weren't offering much. They were pretty enough, especially the ones with Zoe Saldana, but *Colombiana* is so cookie-cutter a revenge flick that I began to wonder if Luc Besson (*The Fifth Element*, *District B13*) wrote it in his sleep, or perhaps just allowed someone to put his name on a script he only saw in passing.

That's not to suggest that all of Besson's creations as a writer — which include *The Transporter*, *Taken* and *Angela-A* — are brilliant works of art. Still, the only work of art on display in *Colombiana* is Saldana, slim and catlike as Catalaya, a young woman who dreams only of avenging her parents, who were murdered when she was very young by some sort of underworld boss. (Amanda Stenberg plays a precociously graceful young Catalaya.) Saldana sells *everything*, from her faux-drunken stumble into a police station to her wrenching sobs when yet more people she cares about are taken from her.

She sells, but that doesn't mean we're buying. *Colombiana* gets very dull in the stretches that don't involve one of Catalaya's cleverly plotted murders. The film fills in the space around these murderous capers with three things: Utterly standard speeches from her uncle, who trains her to be a killer; moments of

coincidence that would have you believe the FBI only ever finds serial killers when the mail guy happens by and recognizes their tags; and fairly chaste make-out sessions between Catalaya and her supersensory artist boy toy, Danny (Michael Vartan). If Vartan has parlayed his role on *Alias* into a career making out with stunning badass women, more power to him, but he's barely even window dressing here.

Nothing about *Colombiana* is entirely wrong; nothing about it is entirely right, either. The movie looks fine, and an opening chase sequence pitting a generous handful of thugs against a small girl in her school uniform borrows nicely from the *parkour* Besson so entertainingly showcased in *District B13*. Saldana and her supporting cast are game enough that you never quite want to roll your eyes in disgust (though the tired all-Latin-Americans-are-thugs trope did bring me close). You may, however, let out a disbelieving snort or two.

For all the ways *Colombiana* is cut from worn cloth, and made by men who can't conceive of female action-hero traits beyond "aggressive" and "sexually aggressive," I still dread seeing its box-office showing held up as another reason why women can't open big films. (Oddly, you never see anyone blaming men as a whole when shitty dude-movies fall on their faces.) It's fine. This kind of movie defies star rating systems and defies critics. It's shiny and dumb and makes you think about dinner, but it also stars a Latina woman as a Latina heroine — a rare thing indeed — and didn't require a burly, super-famous male love interest to get made. That counts for a few points, and a few topics of discussion over dinner. **EW**

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THE GUARD 5:10 7:20 9:30		5:10 7:25 9:35	2:45 5:10 7:25 9:35	2:45 5:10 7:25 9:35	2:45 5:10 7:25 9:35	5:10 7:25 9:35	5:10 7:25 9:35
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APOLLO 18 (DIGITAL) (PG-13) 12:35, 2:50, 5:05, 7:20, 9:35	HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS, PART 2 (DIGITAL) (PG-13) 1:45, 4:40, 7:45, 10:45
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CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE FIRST AVENGER (DIGITAL) (PG-13) 11:00, 1:55, 4:50, 7:50, 10:40	OUR IDIOT BROTHER (DIGITAL) (R) 12:35, 2:55, 5:15, 7:35, 9:55
CARS 2 (DIGITAL) (G) 11:30, 2:10	RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (DIGITAL) (PG-13) 11:20, 1:55, 4:30, 7:05, 9:40
COLOMBIANA (DIGITAL) (PG-13) 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50	SHARK NIGHT (3D) (PG-13) SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS 12:10, 5:10, 10:10
CONAN THE BARBARIAN (3D) (R) SPECIAL EVENT PRICING: \$3.00 UPCHARGE ALL TICKETS 12:45, 3:25, 6:05, 8:45	SHARK NIGHT (DIGITAL) (PG-13) 2:40, 7:40
CONAN THE BARBARIAN (DIGITAL) (R) 11:25, 2:05, 4:45, 7:25, 10:05	THE SMURFS (DIGITAL) (PG) 11:15, 1:50, 4:25, 7:00, 9:35
COWBOYS & ALIENS (DIGITAL) (PG-13) 1:45, 4:35, 7:25, 10:15	SPY KIDS: ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD (3D) (PG) 2:20, 7:00
THE DEBT (DIGITAL) (R) 11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30	SPY KIDS: ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD (DIGITAL) (PG) 4:40, 9:20
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GREEN LANTERN (PG-13) 12:25, 3:05, 5:45, 8:30	SUPER 8 (PG-13) 11:35, 2:10, 4:50, 7:45, 10:25
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Fri. - Sun. 6:30 PM 9:50 PM

SHARK NIGHT IN REALD 3D - EVENT PRICING (PG-13) ★
Fri. - Sun. (11:55 2:25) 7:30 10:10

SHARK NIGHT (PG-13) Fri. - Sun. 4:40 PM

APOLLO 18 (PG-13) Fri. - Sun. (11:40 1:55) 4:20 7:40 10:30

THE DEBT (R) - ID REQ'D Fri. - Sun. (11:30 2:10) 4:45 7:20 10:00

OC & DA: COLOMBIANA (PG-13) Fri. (11:35 AM) 7:15 PM Sat. (2:00 PM) 9:45 PM Sun. (11:35 AM) 9:45 PM

COLOMBIANA (PG-13) Fri. (2:00 PM) 9:45 PM Sat. (1:35 AM) 4:25 PM 7:15 PM Sun. (2:00 PM) 4:25 PM 7:15 PM

OUR IDIOT BROTHER (R) - ID REQ'D Fri. - Sun. (12:05 2:20) 4:35 7:00 9:15

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK (R) - ID REQ'D Fri. - Sun. (12:10 2:35) 5:00 7:45 10:35

CONAN THE BARBARIAN (R) - ID REQ'D Fri. - Sat. (12:15 PM) 7:05 PM Sun. (12:25 2:50 5:10) 7:50 10:25

SPY KIDS 4 IN REALD 3D - EVENT PRICING (PG-13) ★
Fri. - Sun. (2:05 PM) 6:45 PM 9:20 PM

SPY KIDS 4: ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD (PG) Fri. - Sun. (11:50 AM) 4:30 PM

30 MINUTES OR LESS (R) - ID REQ'D Fri. - Sat. (12:25 2:50) 5:10 7:50 10:25 Sun. (12:25 2:50 5:10) 7:50 10:25

THE HELP (PG-13) Fri. - Sun. (12:35 3:50) 6:55 10:05

RISE OF THE PLANET OF THE APES (PG-13) Fri. - Sun. (11:45 2:15) 4:50 7:25 10:20

COWBOYS AND ALIENS (PG-13) Fri. - Sun. (12:30) 4:15 7:15 10:15

CRAZY, STUPID, LOVE (PG-13) Fri. - Sun. (12:40) 4:10 7:10 9:50

CAPTAIN AMERICA (PG-13) Fri. - Sat. (3:00 PM) 8:55 PM Sun. (3:00 PM) 10:05 PM

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CONAN THE BARBARIAN (R) - ID REQ'D Fri. - Sun. (7:30 PM) 10:30 PM

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Fri. - Sun. (7:10 PM) 10:10 PM

PRICE (R) - ID REQ'D Fri. - Sun. (1:30) 4:20 7:00 9:50

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CARS 2 (G) Fri. - Sun. (1:40 PM) 4:30 PM

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