



DEADPOOL (RYAN REYNOLDS) BY THE FIRE



JAMES BLAME

COPING SKILLS

The old adage that “laughter is the best medicine” has been put to the test by a pair of Eugene filmmakers. Produced and directed by James Blame and Ryan Shoop of Magbas Entertainment, *Coping with Comedy* is a 30-minute documentary that takes a look at the way local comedians use stand-up as a way of dealing with the trauma of various mental health issues.

“In the movie we briefly cover some very dark subject matter,” says Blame, who turned to stand-up comedy to channel the grief of losing his wife of 20 years. “Using comedy to deal with serious life issues is very liberating, in the sense that you find a common bond with fellow human beings.”

Blame appears in the film along with a handful of local comedians, each of whom describes in intimate detail the personal travails that get worked out as punch lines on stage. The comedy routines captured in the film reverberate with these lived experiences in a way that draw a direct link between the pain and laughter of life.

“I credit comedy with saving my life,” Blame says. “While comedy may not work for everyone, for many of us it’s a life-changing experience.”

Blame says that he and Shoop are curating a Magbas film festival that will take place January 2017 in Eugene, where *Coping with Comedy* will be featured. For now, you can watch the doc at <http://bit.ly/1V17jg0>. For more information, visit magbasentertainment.com. — Rick Levin

DICKING AROUND

Deadpool is fun and snarky, even if it’s still pretty much a superhero sausage fest

The long-awaited *Deadpool* movie is a lot of excellent things: Lively! Violent! Cleverish! Ribald! (If you don’t enjoy the occasional — OK, frequent — dick joke, this is probably not the movie for you.) As the title character, Ryan Reynolds is in his element, and he embraces the challenge of being a likable, violent smartass whose face we often can’t even see (it’s a physical role on more than one level).

But the real draw is the movie’s irreverence, which starts with the opening credits and levels up with the drawn-out opening sequence, full of slow-motion bullets and blood splatter. *Deadpool* can’t kill a bad guy without making a joke about it, never met an X-Man he didn’t want to rile up and he loves breaking the fourth wall, frequently with meta-cracks about superheroes. Before he becomes *Deadpool* (in a horrible accident involving an experimental cancer treatment), Wade Wilson, a special-forces bro turned mercenary, has a delightful relationship with Vanessa (*Firefly*’s Morena Baccarin). They have a lot of sex and crack a lot of jokes. It’s wonderful — until the plot gets set in motion.

And this is where *Deadpool* falls short of being the truly different

movie it could have been. Vanessa is great; surly goth Negasonic Teenage Warhead (Brianna Hildebrand) is a brilliant foil to the manic *Deadpool*; any movie that presumes that Gina Carano can take on *Colossus* is all right by me. But when *Deadpool*’s looping, non-linear, delightful twisty narrative straightens out for the movie’s final conflict, it’s the tired rescue-the-girlfriend-from-the-bad-guys storyline, and it highlights something: For all the superhero tropes *Deadpool* skewers, the movie can’t truly break away from superhero films’ relationship to gender.

The bar where Wade hangs out is 97 percent dudes. Vanessa plays a part in her own rescue, but that doesn’t change the fact that it’s still the main thrust of the movie’s climax (all puns intended). She makes a *Star Wars* joke and Wade cracks that he must have built her in a lab. It’s 2016; *Star Wars* is not an obscure nerd property known only to human beings with penises.

You want to step one toe further into subversive waters? Have Vanessa make a joke about *his* nerd knowledge being up to snuff. If you’re going to send up the superhero genre from within, you shouldn’t skip over the part of that world that insists on thinking women are different and weird and don’t understand.

Deadpool is a lot of fun all the same — wry, snarky, self-deprecating anti-heroes are always welcome, and the movie’s success will pave the way for more sarcastic, sexy, semi-adult superhero films. But if the genre really wants to grow up, it’s going to have to get a little more inclusive. (Pro tip: You can do this and still make dick jokes.) — Molly Templeton

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