

## MOVIE REVIEW

# Harding tale 'I, Tonya' sticks the landing

Figure skater from Oregon

By JAKE COYLE  
Associated Press

"I, Tonya" is the Tonya Harding film you never knew you wanted: an outrageously entertaining reappraisal of the Olympic figure skater who, in 1994, was involved in a scheme to injure her main rival, Nancy Kerrigan.

Resurrecting Harding from the yellowed pages of '90s tabloids may seem about as necessary as a production of "Lorena Bobbitt on Ice." But yesterday's media spectacle has been very good for today's movies. It's no surprise by now that the tabloid caricatures sketched in a sensational news stories don't always do justice to the truth.

The more layered truths behind scandals of the past have made for some great documentaries (particularly last year's "O.J.: Made in America" and "Hot Coffee," the



Margot Robbie as Tonya Harding in a scene from 'I, Tonya.'

illuminating story behind the coffee that was "too hot") and a number of recent dramatic highlights, like Aaron Sorkin's upcoming "Molly's Game," about the woman callously dubbed the "poker princess" by the tabloids.

Craig Gillespie's movie — an "I, Claudius" for less regal times — isn't a sober reassessment of Harding. It's a winking, rollicking dark comedy both empathetic and pugna-

al-America sneer of "Good-Fellas." "I, Tonya" is a peek behind a media circus that can't help going along for the ride, too.

"I, Tonya," written by Steven Rogers, is introduced as: "Based on irony free, wildly contradictory, totally true interviews with Tonya Harding and Jeff Gillooly." It begins in a mock-documentary style with the characters — Margot Robbie as Harding, Sebastian Stan as Gillooly — giving present-day interviews recalling "the incident." Their stories sometimes converge,

sometimes deviate and the movie — in a well-worn gimmick — playfully pauses at various points with characters turning to the camera to relay their perspective.

The approach sometimes spoils the fun of "I, Tonya" but Tatiana S. Riegel's editing is kinetic and the performances keep "I, Tonya" hurtling forward. Especially Allison Janney. She plays Harding's bitter, abusive chain-smoking mother, LaVona, and her performance is a monument of brutal, caustic wit. In the film's early scenes at their Port-

land hometown, she puts a 4-year-old Tonya on the ice and smirks as she skates loops around much older and more well-to-do competitors. But she's downright mean, too. In one scene, she refuses to let Tonya go to the bathroom. When Tonya pees herself, LaVona declares, "Skate wet!"

And that is, on the scale of things, not the worst of the abuse heaped on Harding. Once she finally flees her mother's cruelty, she moves in with Gillooly — a leap from the frying pan to the fire if ever there was one. Their romance is sweet at first, but he soon begins hitting her, especially as Harding's career blossoms. (She was the first U.S. skater to land a triple axel.)

"I, Tonya" casts its infamous protagonist, nicknamed "Trashy Tonya," as a working-class insurgent in a glitzy and prim sport. She's proudly "poor and redneck," jogging with bags of dog food hoisted on her back and performing skating routines set to ZZ Top. Gillespie ("Lars and the Real

Girl," "Their Finest Hours") fills his movie with tasteless interiors and period scrunchies, and scores it with a blaring rock 'n' roll soundtrack that plays across Harding's on-ice triumphs and domestic poundings, alike.

Robbie, in her finest performance yet, plays Harding as above all a survivor, smiling through pain and prejudice as she pursues her dream, only to be dragged down by those around her. She's a punching bag who should be pitied, but is instead made a punchline when the Coen brothers-esque scheme by Gillooly — likewise a victim of his associates — and bodyguard Shawn Eckhardt (Paul Walter Hauser) rapidly spins out of control.

"I, Tonya" has fun with the various versions of the Kerrigan attack, treating it like "Rashomon" for idiots. But the main takeaway is a believable one: that Harding, just 23 at the time, deserved better than yet another beat-down meted out by a much-entertained public.

## US officials investigating Oregon marijuana operation

Cottage Grove asked for federal help

By ANDREW SELSKY  
Associated Press

SALEM — Federal officials are investigating a marijuana processing facility in Oregon after an explosion there injured a man who was previously convicted in a money laundering operation

linked to pot-trafficking.

The probe is a fairly rare instance in which U.S. officials are investigating a marijuana case in a state where pot is legal. Federal enforcement of U.S. laws that ban possession and distribution of marijuana is restricted by the U.S. Justice Department, but is permitted when marijuana is being distributed to other states and in a few other situations.

Police in Cottage Grove called on the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

for help after fire officials found hundreds of marijuana plants growing inside the building where the explosion occurred in November. The explosion burned a man who was on parole after serving a 90-day sentence in the money laundering operation. The Register-Guard reported.

"We have a large amount of marijuana grows," Capt. Doug Skaggs of the Cottage Grove Police Department said in a telephone interview. "We're not different than everyone

else (in Oregon)."

Skaggs said that due to manpower issues, the police department often liaises with the DEA.

A report by The Associated Press in August showed that large amounts of marijuana are being smuggled out of Oregon, although what percent of the tons grown in the state is trafficked is hotly debated. Local law enforcement in Oregon is often too strapped for personnel and funds, and is busy with other investigations and

mindful of restrictions against searches without cause, to figure out which grows are registered and legal and which are illegal.

When DEA agent Sean Cummings got a warrant the day after the explosion and searched the building, he found 728 growing pot plants, 1,200 pounds of marijuana, and marijuana extracts, according to federal court documents. That address was not authorized by Oregon authorities to grow or process marijuana, the court

documents say.

Eric Scully, who was burned on the face and hands in the explosion which was apparently caused by combustible materials used to make marijuana oil, had been on parole after accepting a plea agreement in federal court last year. Investigators say he had shipped marijuana grown in Oregon via the mail to states where it remains illegal. Cottage Grove is also next to Interstate 5, a major drug-trafficking route.

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