

Film Reviews

Here Comes the Boom: Teacher Moonlights as MMA Prizefighter to Save School's Music Program

Scott Voss (Kevin James) is a bored biology teacher at mythical Wilkinson High in Massachusetts, a cash-strapped school suffering from low morale. The apathetic slacker is part of the problem, as he sets a horrible example for his students, between stealing candy from vending machines and always arriving late for class.

During recess, the bored, 42 year-old bachelor makes a habit of flirting with the beautiful school nurse, Bella (Salma Hayek). However, she just as routinely rebuffs his advances with gentle reminders of how often she's rejected each of his requests for a date.

The plot thickens the day Principal Betcher (Gregg Gorman) assembles the faculty in the auditorium to announce his latest budgetary cutbacks. Those money-saving measures not only include plans to eliminate afterschool activities like the debate club and field trips but even the entire music program.



'Here Comes the Boom'

That means Scott's colleague Marty Streb (Henry Winkler) will be callously laid-off right before earning tenure. And to add insult to injury, the dedicated music teacher's firing comes at a time when his wife (Nikki Tyler-Flynn) is pregnant.

This dire state of affairs inspires Scott to prevail upon the principal to preserve his pal's position. But Betcher says he simply doesn't have the \$48,000 to pay Marty.

Therefore, Scott, who hasn't wrestled competitively since college, decides to raise the cash by moonlighting in the ring as a Mixed Martial Arts fighter. With the help of Marty and a retired kickboxing champ (Bas Rutten), he proceeds to whip himself into the best shape a middle-aged couch potato might hope for.

So unfolds "Here Comes the Boom," a sweet-natured, overcoming-the-odds sports saga combining familiar elements of Rocky (1976) and Nacho Libre (2006). Directed by Frank Coraci (The Waterboy), the star vehicle showcases Kevin James' comic genius at his best, whether he's doing pratfalls in a mask and ill-fitting stretchy pants or futilely wooing the woman of his dreams.

The paint-by-numbers plot inexorably builds to a UFC-sanctioned showdown between Scott and an intimidating adversary (Krzysztof Soszynski) for a purse conveniently matching Marty's salary. Wouldn't it be nice if Wilkinson's student body and school band were on hand in the Vegas arena to cheer for their altruistic teach, and better yet if Bella had a change of heart and also arrived ringside for a kiss at the moment of truth?

Here Comes the Boom

Very Good (3 stars)

Rated PG for sports violence, crude humor and mild epithets.

Running time: 105 minutes

Distributor: Columbia Pictures

Argo: Espionage Thriller Recounts Diplomats' Daring Escape from Iran

On Nov. 4, 1979, Iranian militants stormed the walls of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, taking 52 Americans hostage with hopes of exchanging them for the recently-deposed Shah. What ensued was a 444-day ordeal which would last long after the despised despot died in exile without standing trial.

While that drawn-out standoff continued to occupy the world's attention as front-page news, almost no one knew that a half-dozen Americans had managed to steal away unnoticed during the assault and taken refuge in the home of the Canadian Ambassador, Ken Taylor (Victor Garber).



KAM'S CAPSULES

Movie Reviews by Kam Williams

And the discovery of their whereabouts by the rabidly anti-Western, Khomeini regime would have undoubtedly triggered another international incident.

So, they surreptitiously contacted the CIA which assigned their rescue to Tony Mendez (Ben Affleck), an exfiltration specialist with a perfect record of freeing captives from such perilous predicaments. Agent Mendez proceeded to hatch an attention-grabbing scheme that was the antithesis of the sort of clandestine operation one might expect of a spy.

His high-profile plan involved creating a cover for the stranded diplomats by making a movie that was actually nothing more than a CIA front. First, he enlisted the assistance of a veteran Hollywood executive (Alan Arkin) and an Oscar-winner (John Goodman) sworn to secrecy, to lend an air of authenticity to the ruse by posing as the picture's producer and makeup artist, respectively.

The media falls for it hook, line and sinker, and soon Tinseltown was abuzz about "Argo," an upcoming sci-fi set to be shot on location in Iran. Upon arriving at the ambassador's house, the hero hands the six Americans newly-prepared passports with fresh identities as members of a Canadian film crew.



'Argo'

The tension rapidly ratchets-up in intensity as the ever-vigilant Iranian authorities close-in just as the diplomats make their escape to the airport where the slightest slip during an interrogation could mean the difference between life and death. An edge-of-your-seat thriller not to be forgotten at Oscar time!

Argo

Excellent (4 stars)

Rated R for profanity and violent images.

Running time: 120 minutes

Distributor: Warner Brothers

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