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3 stars

Drew Barrymore shines in raunchy 'Going the Distance'

September 02, 2010 | By Michael Phillips | Movie critic



Courtesy Warner Bros. Pictures, Courtesy Warner Bros. Pictures H

3 stars

Warning: This is not a reliable review of "Going the Distance." When it comes to contemporary American romantic comedy, my brain, heart and standards have been seriously compromised by "The Ugly Truth," "The Bounty Hunter," "Did You Hear About the Morgans?" and "The Back-up Plan" and many others. Too many others.

The calculated sexual raunch (mostly verbal) in "Going the Distance" impinges on its hard-edged, soft-center charm, and that may be enough to throw various audience segments straight out of the thing. But screenwriter Geoff LaTulippe's story of a recession-era long-distance relationship and its hurdles takes its characters seriously. Moreover, it takes place in something like the real world and makes the most of its leading actors, one of whom I never really liked much until this movie.

I speak of Justin Long, the rich man's Bob Denver. Here he plays Garrett, a fledgling, frustrated record-label A&R rep tasked with overseeing a Jonas Brothers-style haircut band. Over a video round of "Centipedes one night at a Manhattan bar, this boy-man with "Top Gun" posters on his wall meets a newspaper intern for the fictional New York Sentinel. She is played by Drew Barrymore. There's no other way to say it: Barrymore's a great broad. Has been for years, in everything from "Never Been Kissed" to the idiotic "Charlie's Angels" pictures. Her character here is a hard-drinking survivor of various bruising relationships and, at 31, she's too old to be a fully self-respecting intern. Good detail, that. Erin is to return to her native San Francisco in six weeks. A late-summer fling turns into a more vaguely defined commuter relationship, kept alive by adrenaline, game but awkward phone sex (clever scene) and frequent-flier miles.

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