

EDDIE THE EAGLE Exudes Goofy Charm

Written by gallupsun
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By Glenn Kay

For the Sun

Rating: 3 out of 4 stars

Running Time: 105 min.



Sometimes, despite your rational mind telling you that what you're watching is about as corny as they come, you still can't help but like a movie. *Eddie the Eagle* is one such example. This biopic of the goofy British ski-jumper is big, broad and lacks any kind of subtlety. Yet somehow it charms with its earnestness, resulting in a warm and inspirational tale of a young man refusing to let anything come in the way of achieving his dream.

Of course, that grand dream does change somewhat. Beginning with Eddie as an accident-prone child in a leg brace, we see him inspired to become an Olympian. Much to his

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parent's chagrin, his passion never dissipates. As an adult (played by Taron Egerton), Eddie modifies his goals after being introduced to skiing. When the lad is cut from the British National Team and told he's not the type to be selected by snooty committee members, he discovers ski-jumping. Before long, Eddie begins a plot to learn the sport and make the Olympics the following year. When he travels to Germany to literally learn "how to land," he encounters an American ex-jumper named Bronson (Hugh Jackman). The grouchy boozehound reluctantly agrees to coach Eddie.

Frankly, there are no deeper meanings or subtext to the story. Many of the athletes and committee members are broadly presented as jerks who berate and belittle the hero's efforts. Eddie himself isn't an onion with layers to be peeled back that reveal deeper intent or a complex history. But then again, it doesn't appear that the real subject was much of a tortured soul either. The man's motivation is simple; an unending childhood desire to be a part of the Olympic Games and compete to the best of his (somewhat limited) ability.

Along the way, Eddie is pummeled by the jumps and made fun of by others... including his own coach. Thankfully, the two leads make a strong comic pairing and their character's personalities contrast well, resulting in some amusing verbal exchanges. Egerton should be singled out for making this man likable, when he could have come across as too one-note or even a nut. There's an awkwardness to the character (partly displayed with some facial tics) that's endlessly appealing. He's so likable that when the bad guys try to stop him, it's akin to watching a puppy being abused.

While the competition itself doesn't necessarily allow for lengthy sport sequences and big drama, the excellent cinematography does impress. As someone who has watched the sport on television, it's obvious that the competitors are up quite high. However, the movie captures the scale better than any event coverage, clearly displaying the frightening and at times dizzying heights from which the athletes perform. You get a palpable sense of the imminent danger that they all face with every jump. At points, the filmmakers even place cameras close to the character during ski-jumps to give a sense of what it must be like to hurtle down the track at incredible speeds and float through the air.

It's hammy and its emotional manipulations are completely obvious, but none of that seemed to matter to me. *Eddie the Eagle* boasts a lead character who isn't one of the best or brightest; instead, he's the sweetest and most determined. It's about as an endearing a role model for young and old as