

Real life heroes prevail in 'The Finest Hours'

Written by By David Pinson For the Sun
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Rating «««« out of 4 Stars

RUNNING TIME: 1 hr 57 min

Saturated with a refreshingly old fashioned sense and sensibility, *The Finest Hours* is an exciting throwback to the harrowing adventure films of days past. The fact that this is a Disney film makes all the more sense as the story of real-life hero Bernie Webber would have felt right at home alongside Davy Crockett and True-Life Adventures on Sunday night's *Wonderful World of Disney*.

It was 1952 when an unforgiving blizzard hit Cape Cod. Snow fell in thick sheets and the ocean raged. In an unprecedented display of terrible luck, two oil tankers snapped in half off the Massachusetts' coastline. The coastguard had the resources to help one sinking ship but a second doomed crew? That's when Bernie Webber (played by Chris Pine) was ordered to take a small group of four men out a tiny boat and do the best he could. The locals thought it a suicide mission but Webber is focused on the mission: "You gotta go out. They don't say you gotta come back in." That's what he tells his crew. And it is that laser-focused mentality that sets us off on one of the most heroic rescue missions in American history.

This true life story is incredible. Fifty-plus years ago they did not have the technology we take for granted today. No sonar on the boat, no GPS to guide the blind. Hell, Webber doesn't even have a compass (!!) to help him find his way. This is a living miracle story that makes for an inspiring night at the multiplex.

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Aside from the source material, the film bolsters and impressive cast. Chris Pine as Webber truly transforms himself in the role. Pine is a handsome, confident man in most of his films. You don't get cast as the new Captain Kirk without some swagger in your walk. In *The Finest Hours* he turns a polar opposite of his persona, presenting Webber as a quiet, reserved man who struggles for the respect of those around him. Even his lovely fiancé, Miriam, has to ask him to marry her. Not a big deal now but in sexist 50's, this was not the norm.

Holliday Grainger plays Miriam with a strong confidence. While her story coping being left ashore while her loved one braves the impossible is important to counter-balance the tension, the filmmakers spend too much time with the character. There is not enough growth in Miriam to share that much screen time. Keep the film on the boat. Keep the film on the rescue.

The rest of the fine cast is rounded out by manly men pulling manly faces for the cameras. Eric Bana, Ben Foster and Casey Affleck all play their roles with conviction. Affleck is wonderful as the strong-jawed Ray Sybert, one of the ill-fated men trapped on the sinking tanker. He looks like a young Errol Flynn and brings the hero vibe better than his brother Ben seems to as Batman.

What really makes *The Finest Hours* worth the price of admission is the special effects. They are almost subtle despite the fact they encompass the screen. You can almost forget that the cast is not really on a boat in a horror-storm. The effects are seamless. However, I don't think it is necessary to pony up for the 3D ticket. The movie is too dark to achieve the full effect of the 3D. Stay with the standard presentation and you'll be fine.

While not perfectly paced, *The Finest Hours* maintains a nice and steady stream of tension. Webber's story is an interesting one. We need heroes and to reflect on those of the past gave me solace that there are more out there that aren't relegated to wearing tights in a Marvel Movie.

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