

Sarz's Media Virus Jarhead: From book to film

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The Weather Man

The Details: Paramount Pictures presents a film starring Nicolas Cage and Michael Caine, directed by Gore Verbinski, and written by Steve Conrad. The film has a running time of 101 minutes and is Rated R for strong language and sexual content.

The Low Down: David Spritz (Nicolas Cage) is a Chicago weather man going through a tough divorce. Everything in his life seems to fall apart, while he falls to pieces trying to hold it all together.

The Dirty: I loved this movie, and the funny thing is, I usually hate Nicolas Cage. This is the most true-to-life writing I have witnessed in a long time. If you have ever had everything in your life seem to go wrong all at once, and there was nothing you could do to fix it, but tried anyway, then this is the movie for you. The film borders on comedy and drama, focusing mainly on the things in life people do not find funny while they are happening, but in hindsight make you laugh. The sheer misery is surrounded by humor, unseen by the characters, and I think this is the best part. How seriously the characters take their lives is part of the beauty of it. When you have a character being funny on purpose it kills the joke, when it is more subtle, like it is here, what you wind up with is laughs while you watch the film, and laughs after the film is done. That is why I can say the writing on this film is simply brilliant. Steve Conrad did an amazing

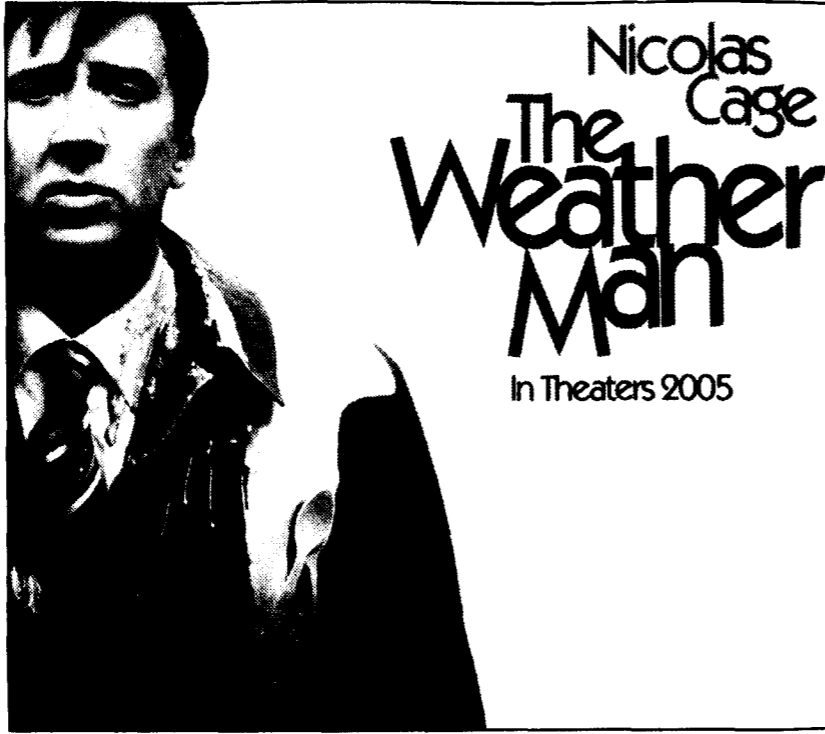


Photo courtesy of weathermanmovie.com

Nicolas Cage stars as a Chicago weatherman with everything in his life falling apart in this new real to life film.

job, not to mention what Gore Verbinski did for the look and feel, which also surpasses expectations.

Between Cage and Caine, a true father-son relationship exists. I'm tired of seeing perfect family relationships on film. This is not one of these. No matter what Cage's character does to try to live up to his father's expectations, he never quite gets approval. The jokes that surround this are just pure genius.

There are only a few minor faults in this film. The first being, although Cage pulled off some really good acting, he still has no clue how to cry on cue. The second problem is the product placement. It seemed as though every major fast food chain paid to have their product mentioned by name during the course of

the film. The only upside to this is that all products were mentioned in a negative way.

I recommend you run out and see this film while it is still in theaters. I am stingy with the fives, so this is a rarity for me. I walked into this film without knowing anything about it, and walked out feeling lucky to have been there.

I give it 5 Outbreaks out of 5.



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Jarhead

The movie *Jarhead*, while well acted and directed, does not come close to the book.

The simple reason is there is far too much story and emotion in the 363-page book for Director Sam Mendes to include in the film. *Jarhead* is a personal history of the life and experiences of Anthony 'Swoff' Swofford; Mendes had the dilemma of providing the story of Swoff, the man, or Swoff, the Marine. Mendes chose to concentrate on Swoff, the Marine.

The movie begins with Swoff in bootcamp with Drill Instructor Sgt. Fitch, using colorful language, "informing" recruits about their place in the Marine Corps, as well as in life and on earth in general.

After the touching scene where Sgt. Fitch puts Swoff's head through the chalkboard when Swoff gives his reason for joining the Marines ("I got lost on the way to college, Sir!"), the film cuts to the flashbacks included in the book, which help define Swoff's mental state (accurately portrayed as unstable in the film), worldview and motivation for joining The Corps; Mendes teases the viewers with these few quick cuts (dad and mom conceiving Swoff, neurotic Mom crying while baking brownies, Swoff's institutionalized sister, Swoff having sex with sweetheart, and Swoff reading Camus) and all of the super-important background information that help us see what makes Swoff tick as a character. This is Mendes' flaw: either tell everything, or stick to the military

sections of the book.

Mendes then cuts to Swoff trying to find a way out of the Marines in Camp Pendleton (playing sick and chugging laxatives), and his accidental joining of the elite in Scout Snipers (through typical Marine Corps humiliation and goading, of course).

Viewers watch the physical and mental conditioning of Scout Snipers for battle and killing, as well as the range of absurdities, humor, and tests that go with that training. Mendes captures the boredom, horseplay and monotony of waiting for battle, the fears and anxieties of anticipating battle, and the disappointment and confusion caused by missing battle, climaxing with Swoff and his spotter Troy aiming in on an Iraqi officer.

Jake Gyllenhaal not only physically resembles the real

"Swoff," but he plays a believable one. His dark, emotional portrayal and narration really bring the film credibility; Jamie Foxx and Peter Sarsgaard both perform brilliantly.

Anthony Swofford opens his soul to his readers in his book, and Mendes gives as much as he can of it to the audience. *Jarhead* is not a rock-em, sock-em war flick. There really isn't much blood and guts, and it's not necessary; it is the story that counts... Mendes does his best to stick with it.

Watch the movie if you can, but definitely make sure to read the book. *Jarhead* is a tale that needed to be told, and a movie that needed to be made. It is real, and it is raw. You may love it or hate it, but take it for what it is: one man's experience, nothing more, nothing less.



Photo courtesy of imdb.com

Jake Gyllenhaal stars as Anthony 'Swoff' Swofford alongside Jamie Foxx in the movie *Jarhead* based on former Marine Anthony Swofford's best-selling 2003 book.

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