

Movie Review: '2 Guns' movie adaptation flourishes as action flick

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"2 Guns" was the newest effort by studio executives to attempt to make graphic novels profitable at the box office.

Between "Kick Ass" and "Wanted," there didn't seem to be a consistent formula to making graphic novel adaptations work. The action flick starring Denzel Washington and Mark Wahlberg managed to hit number one at the box office and become a modest commer-

cial success but failed to receive the acclaim that I feel the film deserves.

The story focuses on two partners in crime that realize both are working with larger government officers to pin a bank robbery on the other. The movie is a mixture of old school shoot 'em up, government conspiracy flick, and cartel cowboy film, complete with loyalties that shift with every passing scene.

While the action in the film is superb, as you would expect from any graphic novel, what really seals the deal in my opinion is the sparkling dialogue shared between the two main characters Stig (Wahlberg), and

Buddy (Washington.) Their chemistry is so potent that I found Buddy's love interest, a very lovely Paula Patton, a bit lackluster in comparison; she clearly doesn't hold his heart the way Stig does. The dialogue is also very carefully crafted to fit the frame of the story.

Director Baltasar Kormákur is keenly aware of the exact level of disbelief his violent backstabbing film requires from his audience and the snappy dialogue with constant callbacks perfectly fits the space made for it not pushing any further or falling any shorter than the story allows.

The effect of such careful tailoring is

a witty repartee that pulls the viewer further into the story that the plot alone could manage.

The story is filled with surprisingly well-developed characters all of whom handle the dramatic twists and turns of their plot lines with startling violence and quick humor creating a completely satisfying film.

If you've been largely disappointed by this summer's so-called action films then this is the movie you were being denied. See it, then see it again and who knows when we'll get something so smoothly managed and enjoyable.

Sedaris film interprets ambiguity ambiguously

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Those who are familiar with the name David Sedaris may find they need no further introduction to Kyle Patrick Alvarez's recent adaptation "C.O.G.," based upon Sedaris' same-titled essay. Nevertheless, cult followers and the uninitiated alike—this review is for you. For, as writer/director Alvarez states in his press notes, "[This movie is] an interpretation and is presented as not a part of canon in Mr. Sedaris' life but as its own separate thing...[it] is as much an extension of me as it is Sedaris' story." And what, might you ask, is the result of this triple-lens interpretation? Ambiguity, plain and clear.

"C.O.G." is the story of a college-age student David (Jonathan Groff), who journeys from the upper-class comfort of his Yale dormitory to the apple orchards of Oregon's heartland. This journey, like all great youthful blunders, is instigated by a girl's love and a vaguely insinuated conflict within David's family life. The focus of the journey—to "see how the other side (i.e. lower-class immigrants) lives"—is likewise a pompous misconception of a Walt Whitman-esque romanticism of those close to nature: for David, this amounts to an idealism-cum-condescension, a vacation in which he picks apples and ponders his navel.

The connection with Whitman, however, is relevant on more than one level. The two themes of religion and sexuality run throughout the course of the film and make up the crux of David's coming-of-age story. In these veins, two characters feature prominently: Curley (Corey Stoll) lives with his mother and works as a fork-lift operator in a factory; Jon (Denis O'Hare) is a Desert-Storm veteran who hands out religious tracks with the curi-

ous acronym "C.O.G." These two characters, respectively, compete with David for his love and his soul.

The outcome of these competitions, however,—that is, David's coming-of-age epiphany—, is left up in the air. Indeed, the ending is a kind of twenty-first century "The Lady, or the Tiger" moral cliffhanger in which the audience is left to interpret from his or her own perspective. (In much the same way are the subjects of Christianity and homosexuality covered: choose your own ending.) Thus, Alvarez's interpretation on the screen is less an interpretation, per se, of David's story than it is an extenuation of the already-ambiguous spiritual-sexual dilemma of his life.

Although the audience's experience is filled with humor and pathos, the ending leaves one in a malaise after having watched our anti-hero David encounter two dissatisfying ambassadors of spirituality and sexuality. Shame on us, I suppose, for expecting a coming-of-age moment in a coming-of-age plot.

The bottom line: "C.O.G.," although at times purposefully ambiguous, is an intriguing story with interesting, nuanced characters. Denis O'Hare's character, Jon, is rich with a depth and mystery that captures your attention and leaves you surprised in every scene; his performance alone is worth the price of admission. Also to note, Dale Dickey, who plays a bitter, worn-out factory hag, in less than a paragraph of dialogue completely captures the soul-whittling effects of a lifetime hunched over a conveyor belt.

I suppose the appropriate ending to a review of such an ambiguous film is an equally ambivalent last statement—which I will leave to the reader to construct.

"C.O.G." is now playing at the Gene Siskel Film Center from October 20 through October 26. Times vary. Tickets are \$7 with a student I.D.



Image courtesy of imdb.com

Restaurant Review: Little Caesar's pizza perfect for studious pupils

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As any Dickens tale will tell you, desperation can send one to some dark places.

This is one such tale. It begins on the Friday the 13th, of September. After spending the day in classes, I had spent the afternoon running an errand with a friend that resulted in the need to take two packed rush hour buses home. Being a five feet, six inches tall female has its benefits. For example, in the event of an alien takeover I feel confident in my ability to successfully hide myself in a cabinet. My limited stature does not, however, aid in my ability to successfully keep myself stationary while standing on a crowded bus (I have a dif-

ficult time reaching the bars to hold onto if the loops are all taken.)

On this particular Friday my height, sleep deprived state, and cumbersome backpack combined in such a way that for one glorious hour I became the absolute worst person to stand next to on the bus.

In that hour I pulled one girl's hair twice in an attempt to hold onto the handle behind her head, I hit a fellow patron in the face with my backpack while attempting to make room for a newcomer (I welcomed her by stepping on her foot once and falling into her twice when the bus made sudden stops.)

As I departed the bus, knowing that I may never again feel the thrill of such a remarkable ability to alter the physical and emotional wellbeing so many of my fellow Chicagoans in such a short amount of time, I felt the

need to commemorate the occasion.

And then I saw it. Nestled between a physical therapy center and a Chinese market in a strip mall on South Halsted was a restaurant that is annually robbed of all public recognitions of culinary excellence. Little Caesar's Pizza, one of the last strongholds of affordable whole-self care in the modern age, was the means I needed to reach my end. For those unfamiliar with the concept, Little Caesar's is a no-frills pizza place from which customers can get one of three kinds of pizza (cheese, pepperoni, and sausage) for only \$5.

The impersonal nature of its setup, which consists of a single fridge with cans of pop and a small stainless steel counter, contributes not only to its affordability but also its appeal. At the end of a long week of classes and assignments and extracurricular obliga-

tions, all I wanted was a pizza. I didn't want to hear about the special of the day or the chef's recommendation. I didn't want to sit in a restaurant and make conversation with someone. I wanted pizza and I wanted it now. I wanted to revel, pizza in hand, in my CTA and school-induced exhaustion in the comfort of my own home.

College is a time for exploration and self-discovery. But sometimes these parameters of the college-condition can result in an overworked and overtired student. For moments such as these, it is my recommendation that you embrace the beauty that is the \$5 Little Caesar's pizza.

Little Caesar's Pizza is located at 3010 S. Halsted St. and is open from 10 a.m. until 11 p.m., seven days a week.