

This Week at the Movies: Million Dollar Baby & Constantine

By *srlinuxx*

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Million Dollar Baby is a character study slash friendship movie directed by Clint Eastwood. He does an adequate job though nothing ground breaking. The story centers on Franky, a boxing trainer/manager as he tries to cope with boxers in his charge and some mighty powerful internal demons.

We are never privy to the specifics of his turmoil, but we are told he go to mass everyday, writes his estranged daughter every week begging for forgiveness for something, and suffers the guilt of an injured boxer and friend many years before. The main storyline revolves around Maddie, a female boxer who finally ingratiates herself into his life. The story follows the training and boxing career of Maddie and her interactions with our hero and sidekick. The audience is given a taste of her relationship with her family members and some issues of her own to help build depth and sympathy for the character. A rising star is taken out by one sneaky blow and leaves her with one final favor to ask of Franky. The characters in this excellently written script are likable, admirable, and personable. The performances of Clint Eastwood, Hillary Swank, and Morgan Freeman are of course first rate - as you would expect from these great names. Even if you don't like boxing, this movie is a heart tugging example of the relationship humans form and the rewards and toll that can result. Wonderful first class film.

Constantine is a supernatural thriller directed by Francis Lawrence. A worthy effort considering I couldn't turn up any other credits to his name. The script was original with enough references to known concepts to make it plausible. The direction was creative but using known methods, I saw nothing new. The effects were spectacular and believable. Keanu Reeves delivers a convincing performance as the brooding tormented hero. Rachel Weisz was excellent and beautiful, even after returning from Hell. Aided by other familiar talents such as Tilda Swinton as Gabriel, this movie delivers a creepy experience with a side order of scary thrills. I really enjoyed this flick and can recommend it.

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