

Film Review: Big Fan

By Duane Byrge, January 25, 2009 07:30 ET



Bottom Line: Dark and engrossing look at a sports fanatic.

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PARK CITY -- Some sports fans live and die with their team. "Big Fan" centers on one die-hard New York Giants football fan whose entire life revolves around the team's fortunes.

It's an unsettling, "Taxi Driver"-like character study that shows the underside to hero worship and the primal world of professional football. Don't expect Mike, Tony and Jaws to invite filmmaker Robert Siegel into the booth for "MNF" because "Big Fan" sacks the media image of sports as being a game of champions who are admired by honorable supporters. Nonetheless, it's evident from the football particulars and story line in this well-executed entertainment that Siegel is a knowledgeable football fan.

Paul (Patton Oswalt) lives vicariously through the fortunes of the Giants and worships their star linebacker. Essentially, his entire identity revolves around the fortunes of the team. He's a 36-year-old schlub, toiling as a parking lot attendant, living at home with his mother and calling sports talk radio with rah-rah rants for his team. A loser in every social sense, Paul is admired by his dull-witted sidekick Sal (Kevin Corrigan) for his talk-radio scrambling and Giants loyalty.

In this dark blitz on the sporting world, the duo happens upon Paul's football hero: They follow him and his posse to a strip club, where the agitated linebacker beats Paul to a pulp. It's a savage reaction and, in this Plaxico age, completely credible.

How far will Paul go to sacrifice for his "team"? That's the nightmarish game plan for this dark and chilling film. Siegel has crafted a mesmerizing peek into the dark side of sports fans. He etches the "fanatic" to full and pathetic dimension. Befitting his stint as a former editor for the Onion, Siegel deftly mixes his bleak story line with telling humor.

Oswalt is readily identifiable as the type of guy who avoids real life by submerging himself and his identity into a sports team and athletic star. As his supportive buddy, Corrigan also evinces

the sorry state of the sports-bar loser. As a Philadelphia Eagles superfan, Michael Rapaport erupts with the pent-up rage that unfortunately reflects a certain type of fan.

Technical contributions are all touchdowns, with special praise to production designer Sharoz Makarechi for the blue-collar, sports-world look.

Production: Economy Pictures

Cast: Patton Oswalt, Michael Rapaport, Kevin Corrigan, Marcia Jean Kurtz, Matt Servitto

Director-screenwriter: Robert Siegel

Producers: Jean Kouremetis, Elan Bogarin

Executive producer: Jen Cohn

Director of photography: Michael Simmonds

Production designer: Sharoz Makarechi

Music: Philip Watts

Costume designer: Vera Chow

No rating, 102 minutes

Editor: Joshua Trank

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