

Hers... His... The Shoemakers Review “Miracle”

This is the first of a monthly family entertainment review column written by the wife and husband team, Suzanne and Chris Shoemaker. The Shoemakers co-founded the IFFF (International Family Film Festival) ten years ago in Santa Clarita, California. During that time they have reviewed thousands of independently produced films, screenplays and hosted hundreds of filmmakers from around the world.

Suzanne holds a Ph.D. (Theater) from the University of Missouri with postgraduate studies at Oxford, England.

Chris earned his BFA (Theater) from The Ohio State University and completed studies at the International Circus School and L'Ecole Jacques LeCoq in Paris.

Chris and Suzanne have three sons and two grandchildren.

Hers

Our fourteen-year-old son invited us to *Miracle*, a movie about the 1980 US Ice Hockey Team's win over the Russians. My husband and I both watched the original game broadcast so we knew the climax but we were glad to have our son's attention on a Friday night.

To my surprise I found myself engrossed in Kurt Russell's portrayal of Herb Brook's (the Coach) journey towards victory. As the final seconds ticked off the time clock in the championship game, I held my breath and applauded with other audience members when our boys won! The director Gavin O'Connor crafted the action around a great story and allowed the film to capture the emotional fervor of competition.

On Saturday we drove our fourteen year old to the NBA All Star Jam at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. We spent the day shooting hoops, learning slam dunk techniques, entering 3-point Challenges and, finally, watching some of the NBA's most talented players top each other in the Shoot Out and the Slam Dunk Competitions. The three of us were thrilled as we watched Fred Jones of the Indiana Pacers score a perfect 50 on his slam dunk to advance to the Finals. My son turned to me and said, "This is really cool", and he went back to his cheering.

For me, there were three Miracles this past weekend - the movie, the NBA and an exuberant fourteen-year-old. That's family entertainment!

His

Love a surprise ending? With Disney's film, *Miracle*, we know the 1980 Olympic Hockey championship's outcome (and hence the film's ending) long before the drive to the movie theater, but this movie's storytelling powers make the story and its inevitable ending unfold as if we never knew the wiser.

Film director Gavin O'Connor's keen ability to stick to the now legendary story of how the 1980 US Olympic Ice Hockey team beat the formidable Russian Hockey team without pandering to distracting sentimentality of multiple insignificant subplots ranks, well...as miraculous.

Outstanding performances from Kurt Russell (Coach Herb Brooks), Patricia Clarkson (wife Patti Brooks) and an immensely talented group of youngish actors playing the US Hockey team keep the action tense, unpredictable and utterly believable. This ensemble successfully portrays real people, not icons.



Suzanne and Chris Shoemaker co-founded the IFFF (International Family Film Festival - www.iffilmfest.org). They also own and operate Acts of Creation, a family entertainment company. They live in Southern California close to their 3 sons and 2 grandchildren.

When outside forces threaten to break the team's unity, the players step forward and stand united as a "family". We are reminded (not in a concocted, corny way) that loyalty and faith are rock solid family values - noble qualities that bind us.

Venture out to see this one on the big screen - the skating scenes will sweep you up into a front row seat back to the 1980 Olympics. Rated PG (MPAA), *Miracle* is the kind of film you'd expect to carry the Disney name.