

# ENTERTAINMENT



## Behind-the-Cameras-Crew Makes Latest Surf Movie A Thrilling Experience

By SEAN SMITH

The trailers for "Blue Crush," made me want to stay far, far away from this film. But this nagging voice inside me kept saying, "Yeah, I know it's going to be lame, it will probably be like 1987's 'North Shore.'"

But it's a surf flick — bad story, awful dialogue, none of that will matter; there will be surfing to rescue the movie.

I should listen to that inner voice more often.

The surfing scenes, water photography and sound in this film are excellent and won't disappoint. In fact, veteran surf photographers Don King and Sonny Miller, along with the assistance of body-boarder Michael Stewart (who has a brief appearance riding the shore break at Pipeline), have done a breathtaking job of filming under and over water.

King and Miller have managed to give the audience a fantastic glimpse of the real experience of surfing, from the moments of quiet reflection to its harrowing dangers.

When they take their cameras into the curling waves and under the surface, I could hear the audience holds its collective breath.

When the surfers manage to make their "bottom turn" (first turn) and carve up and down the wave, I swore I heard the audience breathe a heavy sigh of relief.

Other critics are comparing the surf photography in this film to Bruce Brown's seminal surf classic, "The Endless Summer." Although I think this is a bit of an overstatement, "Blue Crush" has raised

the bar for any Hollywood surf film that follows.

Loosely based on Susan Orlean's article "Life's Swell" from Outside Magazine (a much better read than the movie), "Blue Crush" is a typical sports film story: an underrated natural talent needs to fight the ghosts of her dysfunctional family, fight back from poverty and conquer her own fears to enter and win a major sporting event (think "Karate Kid," "Rocky," etc.).

In fact, the entire film is trite and formulaic and there's a lot of things to hate about it. The dialogue is weak and at times laughable. The love story is ridiculous, totally unbelievable, and demeaning to the film's lead character.

The film tries to raise important issues — like the difficult relationship between Ann Marie and her 14-year-old sister, who's destined for "pregnancy, welfare and a trailer," Anne Marie's feelings toward her mother who has abandoned her and her sister, the unfair treatment women get in professional sports — only to abandon them without resolution at the end of the film.

But the acting is solid; Kate Bosworth, Michelle Rodriguez and the other actresses give fine performances.

And anyway, this isn't an art house film, it's a fun surf film, and for the genre, "Blue Crush" holds its own.

More than that, it's the first surf film since the "Gidget" series to explore female surf culture, and that, in my book, is reason enough to support this film.

## MOVIE REVIEW: He Said/He Said

## "Blue Crush" is Grudgingly Admitted Into Community of Worthwhile Summer Flicks

By PETE BROOKS



In spite of an avalanche of pre-opening publicity, Universal Pictures' new babes-in-bikinis flick, "Blue Crush," debuted at an underwhelming No. 3 last weekend, behind returning champ "xXx" and "Signs" from the beginning of the month (see box, left).

On the movie's creative merits: again this week, we have a split decision from our lofty mountaintop of film criticism. "Blue Crush" is a totally, thoroughly by-rote enterprise that I ended up enjoying much more than I should have.

If this review seems a bit conflicted, it's because it is. I am.

I was expecting an easy pan — another self-impressed swoon over contemporary surf culture, much the way "Dogtown and Z-Boys" groveled worshipfully at the feet of the '70s skate scenesters.

Plus, it was easy to hate the players: Kate Bosworth as lead hottie Anne Marie, pro-surfer Sanoe Lake as Lena, ravishing Michelle Rodriguez as Eden ... even the token male player, Matthew Davis as Matt. (Wonder if they had to change the name of his character to his own to get him to respond to dialogue cues?)

Not only are these people better-looking than me, I get the feeling they're all gonna live longer, and enjoy it more than I am, too.

But the movie itself — taken out of the context of whatever personal baggage one brings to the theater — is an entertaining, engaging piffle.

Our three lead babes play nubile hotel maids by day, and surf enthusiasts by even earlier in the day.

Let's see — what happened in this movie again?

Anne Marie's mom has bailed on the family for life as a floozy in Las Vegas, and little sis (14-year-old Mika Boorem) is a party girl who seems ready to follow in mom's spikey-heeled footsteps.

One day, Anne Marie gets fed up with her lousy job at the hotel, and instead of telling off her boss, she takes out her wrath on some especially boorish hotel guests, a vacationing group of NFL neanderthals.

This being a movie, they love her moxie, and hire her to teach them all how to surf after the hotel sacks her.

She falls for the prettiest of the boys (Matt, as Matt), and starts blowing off her training for that weekend's big surf event, in order to spend time with him.

There you go. Movie in a minute.

Lead bunny Anne Marie has issues, boy

does she have issues. Mom Issues, Little Sister Issues, Fear of Drowning Issues, Issues Issues — she has enough issues for all the other female leads put together.

Good thing, too, because nobody but Gidget and Moondoggy are given anything to do.

Michelle Rodriguez, fabulous in 2000's "Girlfight," is especially wasted here. She pretty much pouts throughout the whole thing — and not a sexy pout, either; a sulky one. Seems the "Blue Crush" of the movie's title may be this gal's for her buddy Anne Marie (although with "Blue Crush" being rated PG-13, this theme is never explored).

The other saucy surfer girl, Sanoe Lake, is given absolutely nothing to do, not even surf. Her script must have read, "Stand here and look pretty" on every page.

Meanwhile, come to the theater prepared to have your eardrums assaulted by an intrusive, over-the-top hip-hop soundtrack. Good lord. If I want to hear low-rent thugs scream curses at me in street pentameter, I'll go stand in line at the DMV.

Worse yet, the soundtrack doesn't even have the courage of its own convictions: its hip-hop is bleeped for the PG-13 rating. What kind of "cred" are the filmmakers trying to establish with censored rap?

Oh well.

What saves this movie — besides the pure, visceral beauty of its miles and miles of skin, sand and sunshine — is the last 20 minutes or so, at the surf competition.

Surf photography has come a long way since "Fun In Acapulco," where Elvis wobbled on a balance beam in front of movin' pictures of the ocean, forelock pasted steadfastly in place...

In this movie, you *are* the surf board, and it's an exhilarating experience.

The great — amazing, incredible — underwater photography will leave you breathless, and render all the somnolent dreck leading up to it almost worth the sitting through.

There's even a bit near the end where one competitor helps out another one, for no good reason, other than to do the right thing.

Pure Hollywood, sure, but I loved it.

In the end, I hated myself for liking "Blue Crush," even more than I did for liking "The Fast Runner" — this one isn't even good for me!

Come to think about it, maybe that's what I liked most about it.