

'Patriot' delivers historical war epic

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seem a mile wide.

John Williams' thundering score contributes to the drama. Robert Rodat's screenplay keeps a good balance between military and family matters, but most of the plot turns have a deja vu qual-

ity — the stuff of many a Hollywood war movie or Western.

The Columbia Pictures release was produced by Dean Devlin, Mark Gordon and Gary Levinsohn. Rated R for violence and sadism. Running time: 158 minutes.

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Courtesy photo
JIM CARREY stars with Renee Zellweger in the latest Farrelly Brothers comedy, "Me, Myself and Irene." Carrey plays a schizophrenic state patrolman who is trying to woo Zellweger's character. Starring as Carrey's grown sons are (l-r) Anthony Anderson, Jerod Mixon and Mongo Brownlee

Carrey's persona distracts in 'Irene'

By Samuel McKewon

Senior editor

When "There's Something About Mary" arrived in theaters, the force with which it impacted the comedy genre could not have been anticipated. The Farrelly Brothers, Peter and Bobby, changed the way the funny game is played, so to speak. It's often thought this was accomplished with gross-out gags. In fact, the film simply took the established humor first displayed in affairs like the seminal "The Kentucky Fried Movie" one step further into mainstream.

And so "Mary" tinged off a bevy of copycats, none of which ever reached the comic inspiration and whimsy that was at the heart of that film's musical narration. The Farrelly Brothers had an incisive hit, complete with the comic manifestation of man's ultimate dream in the form of a woman, the title character.

I suspect their latest effort, "Me, Myself, and Irene" is a riff on that same notion, though any film that includes Jim Carrey has to push his female cohort to the side. Like "Mary," there's riffs on several aspects of the world at play in their newest comedy. Somehow, the central story gets lost because the periphery is so cluttered. And well, there's Jim Carrey.

Understand that Carrey is something almost otherworldly in his comic ability. The plastic physicality he reaches in "Me, Myself and Irene" is of epic proportions. He portrays a split personality in Charlie and Hank Baileygates. Charley is a kindly Rhode Island highway patrolman. Hank is a fed-up version of Charley who has been created to fend off some of Charlie's life disappointments.

Those disappointments are far-ranging, but they track mostly back to his first wife. She left him for a black Mensa dwarf, leaving behind three genius boys (with strangely profane mouths) for Charlie to

raise. It works for awhile, and the three boys might be the best thing about the movie. But this plot device, like the entire movie, grates after a while.

Meanwhile, Irene, played by Renee Zellweger, arrives and changes everything, not unlike Cameron Diaz's "Mary." But unlike Diaz, Zellweger, who possesses comparable comic instincts, is relegated to watching Carrey. So is everyone else in this movie that succeeds or fails based on whether or not Jim Carrey is funny.

And there are times when he's hilarious, as he has been before and will be in the future. But the background that made "Mary" and the Brothers' underrated "Kingpin" so rich is lost in the shuffle. And the jokes that may have scored in "Mary" die here; they seem out of place with Carrey's good nature. Even when Carrey plays a character as bad as Hank, he looks too good for us to hate.

Remember that this was a problem in "The Cable Guy," Carrey's best performance. The movie was ultimately an error in casting, because it worked against his persona. When he moved dramatic, his performances in "The Truman Show" and "Man on the Moon," were fine, but absent real acting. In one movie, he drained all characterization, in the other, he played an impersonation.

His presence in "Me, Myself and Irene" hurts the movie. There are two kinds of comedy at battle here. Carrey is broad and likable, any way you slice it. But he does have a clear dark streak that contributes to his popularity. The Farrellys go dark all the way. Unfortunately, the two forces work against each other here.

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