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"Instructions Not Included" - A Family Movie

By Sophie Braccini



"Instructions Not Included" Loreto Peralta and Eugenio Derbez Photo provided

shaped him, is well explored.

Derbez' years acting and directing a TV series show in the way minor characters over-act with an in-your-face caricature of their roles, which might be better suited for television than on the silver screen. But Derbez and Loreto Peralta, the little girl who plays Maggie, form a very charming and credible father/daughter duo. Although Derbez is not very believable at the beginning of the movie when he impersonates a Latin lover - which could be attributed to bad makeup - his portrayal as a father who is tender, imaginative and totally unconventional has a lot of charm. The precocious little girl is definitely the more mature of the two and is very much in control of her performance.

There is nothing unexpected when the abandoning mother comes back and reclaims her daughter. The difficulties that erupt, the child's heartbreaking emotional pulls in different directions, are explored with sensitivity. The mother and her lover, portrayed as villains, are less well developed. But the movie picks up pace at that point and a series of unexpected turns allow for continuous entertainment.

"Instructions Not Included" is a sweet movie for the whole family, offering moments that will illicit both laughter and tears. It also offers a limited but interesting glimpse into southern California's Latino culture.

The movie "Instructions Not Included," directed by Mexican actor, producer and TV host Eugenio Derbez, who plays the film's lead role, Valentin, will kick off the 2014 International Film Showcase at the Orinda Theatre.

Like the 1987 movie "Three Men and a Baby," the sweet story of three men who one morning find a baby girl on their doorstep and whose selfish ways are changed forever as the little girl takes hold of their hearts, "Instructions Not Included" is similar, with a few twists, including a "Kramer vs. Kramer"-like judicial battle.

The general idea of the movie is that to become a man, one has to start taking responsibility. In the case of Valentin, the selfish bachelor takes this premise to the extreme through self-sacrifice that borders on heroism. In order to keep the child he has learned to love, he gives up his own country and pursues a professional career that takes him, literally, to dangerous heights. Then in order to protect the girl's happiness he risks losing her forever.

The film has many elements that are worthy of attention. The generational link between the hardboiled bachelor and the daughter who one morning falls in his lap, but also how Valentin's relationship with his own father

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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