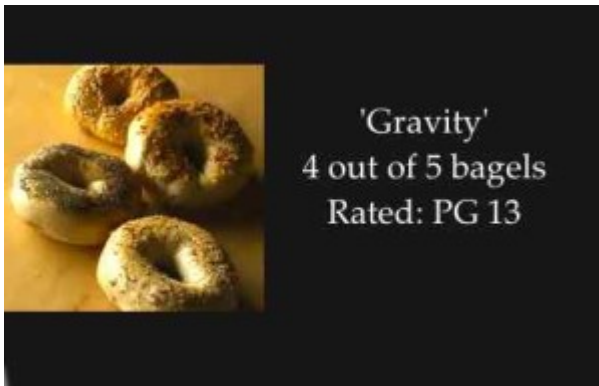


Bullock gives 'Gravity' its real star power



By Howie Nave

It's a well known fact that in space nobody can hear you scream. In a movie theater, though, yes they can. I admit upfront that there were a few scenes where I didn't scream, but an occasional gasp of anticipation? Definitely.

"Gravity" may not be the most accurate space movie I've seen (there were plenty of technical flaws) but it certainly keeps you riveted to the big screen. Much of that credit goes to the movie's primary star, Sandra Bullock. She plays astronaut Ryan Stone, one of several crew members working on the Hubble telescope outside of the space shuttle (which of course is no longer in existence). Fellow (and senior) astronaut Matt Kowalski (played by George Clooney) is the only one not doing any work but instead jetting around the space shuttle showing off his maneuverability skills making wisecrack remarks to his fellow astronauts and to Mission Control back on Earth, which by the way makes for an impressive backdrop.

"Gravity" was written and directed by Alfonso Cuarón, ("Y Tu Mamá También" and "Children of Men") and definitely the most challenging for him. The special effects in this movie were pretty amazing and must be seen in 3D. I normally wouldn't say that, but given the dimension and depth of outer space it is a necessity and really adds to the movie going experience.

If you're claustrophobic and hyperventilate easily, you might want to bring your own portable oxygen container when seeing this. Without giving too much away (nothing that the trailer hasn't already), a catastrophic "accident" on the other side of the planet changes everything for the astronauts putting them in survival mode. Things move pretty quickly after that and you'll be blown away (pun intended) at how fast the movie moves because everything is virtually in real time.

Sandra Bullock once again is caught up in what could be subtitled "Speed 3" but this time she's orbiting thousands of miles above the planet Earth and moving just as fast so one missed calculation would mean no potential sequel. It's not too much of a stretch to say that Bullock's character is the female equivalent of the Tom Hanks' character in the movie, "Cast Away." And like that movie Bullock carries the entire movie being on-screen for pretty much every scene. Clooney's character is more like an extended cameo. Bullock really worked out for this movie and director Cuarón makes sure that we get to see just how buffed out she is in all its 3D splendor.

A movie with just special effects would get old fast, so it's up to Sandra Bullock to bring us on board with her character and to make us care for her and she does that easily with work being her only passion and reason for living. Later on we get to see a little of the philosophical side of her and makes you think about your own place in this life and if you should make some changes to maybe live it more fully.

When you see "Gravity" pay attention to the voice that is Mission Control. That's Ed Harris you hear who had similar duties in Ron Howard's "Apollo 13" (1995) and who played astronaut John Glenn in "The Right Stuff" (1983) so a nice touch given his experience in outer space. Overall not a bad flick falling into the trifecta genre of sci-fi, drama and a thriller. That's why I'm giving it 4 out of 5 bagels. "Gravity" clocks in at a brisk 90 minutes and is rated PG-13

for intense perilous sequences, some disturbing images and brief strong language.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.