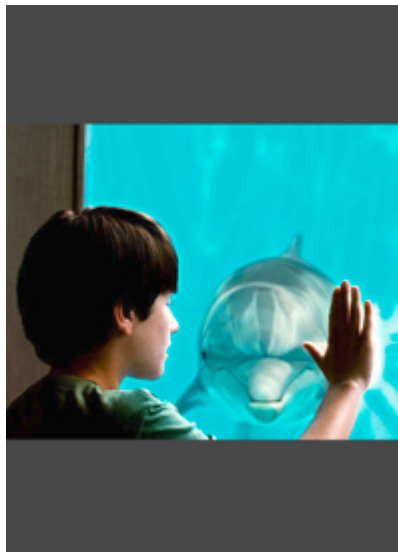




Movie Review: Dolphin Tale

When a young boy discovers a dolphin whose tail was lost in a crab trap, he is inspired to be a hero. A friendship develops between the boy and the dolphin, and the child learns significant life lessons about the importance of fighting for something bigger than himself. That is the premise for *Dolphin Tale*, a heartwarming family film that should prove to be a delightful family outing for the weekend.



Based on a true story, *Dolphin Tale* is about a dolphin named Winter (played by the real Winter), who became entangled in a crab trap and lost her tail as a result. She is rescued and taken to the Clearwater Marine Hospital, but without a tail, Winter's fate is dire.

A boy named Sawyer (Nathan Gamble) takes an interest in the dolphin, and a connection forms, blossoming into a friendship. The film is told from the perspective of Sawyer, a lonely and sheepish eleven-year old, who manages to break free of his shyness and loneliness as his relationship with Winter grows.

However, the benefits of the relationship between Sawyer and Winter are not merely spiritual. The friendship between the boy and the dolphin impact the community as well, bringing out the best in the residents as Sawyer rallies them to help Winter.

The community is optimistic when a doctor (Morgan Freeman) specializing in prosthetics considers the notion of creating a prosthetic tail for the creature. Such an endeavor would prove to be a miracle, one that would benefit Winter as well as a number of others around the world.

At the same time, Winter becomes a source of inspiration for those with whom she comes in contact, including a little girl who is missing a leg. Winter's own struggles inspire those in the community to recognize that anything can be overcome. Winter manages to learn how to swim with just a stump, and then learns to adapt to her prosthetic tail. Her perseverance and ability to thrive in even the most challenging moments makes her a source of inspiration for all of those around her.

In addition to that, Winter's presence at the aquarium virtually manages to save the rescue center from financial collapse, adding yet another emotional layer to the film.

Dolphin Tale has all of the elements of a heart-warming family film, and the plot is even more inspirational as it is based on a true story. However it is not just the plot that drives the film forward, but the performances.

Gamble is memorable as a young boy who is attempting to cope with his own internal struggle. He manages to convince audiences that he has found an outlet through his friendship with the dolphin.

Likewise, Harry Connick Jr., as Sawyer's father and scientist in the film, appeared genuine. His



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 16, 2011

performance was certainly a winning one, and the moments that focused on his relationship with his children were particularly touching, as he was dealing with his own heartache and loss.

Additionally, the film features an array of prominent supporting actors and actresses, including Ashley Judd and Kris Kristofferson.

Yet, even with a well-chosen cast, no single performer outdoes any other. Each one plays their role convincingly, without appearing hyperbolic.

And though the film focuses on a young boy and an injured animal, it is carefully not to stray into territory that would label it too “cutesy.” It manages to be inspiring and emotional without being too over the top.

One of the film’s potential downfalls, however, is its attention, however brief, to issues that seemingly have little if anything to do with the film, including healthcare, the war, and medical care for the troops. These subjects are touched upon as a number of human visitors — including war veterans, who have lost limbs — relate to Winter who struggles to adapt to her prosthetic, as the human visitors are.

However, the film’s primary focus remains the dolphin and the dedication of those around it, which redeems the movie.

Animal lovers will be delighted to learn that Winter’s safety was a top priority during the filming of the movie, and any scenes that were potentially dangerous to the dolphin used animatronics and CGI technology.

The film takes little creative license, sticking close to the actual events. Aquarium CEO David Yates explains, “Largely what you see with her rescue, her rehabilitation, the prosthetic tail being made, the fact it was filmed here and Winter stars are herself, it’s pretty much real life.”

Overall, *Dolphin Tale* is a positive family film that is entertaining for all ages. It is inspiring to see a real-life miracle played out on screen and is likely to provide audiences with a sense of warmth as it acknowledges there is still a great deal of selfless people in this world. It also underscores the benefits of close contact between humans and animals.



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