

'Keeping the Faith' gives twist to classic love story

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CABOLA STAFF WRITER

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Imagine it: A drunken priest
stumbles into an Irish pub,
slumps ento a stool and recounts
a journey that begins with his
sixth-grade buddles and ends
with the love of his life falling for
his best friend, a Rabbi.
While it sounds like the
premise of a joke, no one has
heard this one before. Touchstone Pictures and Spyglass
Entertainment's 'Keeping The
Fith' spins an unusual love triangle in modern day Manhattan.
In the directorial debut of
Edward Norton ('American Histery X' and 'Fight Club'), the

romantic comedy follows three childhood friends – Jake, Brian and Anna – from their carefree days on the basketball courts to careers inside a Roman Catholic Church, a Jawish synagogue and a boardroom.

When 12-year-old Anna must move with her family to California, the three musketcers a respit apart. Years later, a sneay and refined Anna returns to the city on business, and manages to charm both of her friends. One look at Anna Riley – portrayed by the always perky Jenna Elfman ("Dharma and Greg") – and Rabbi Jake Schram (Ben Stiller) and Father Brian Fina (Norton) both fall for her.

Set against a backdrop awash

M 'Keeping The Faith' spins an unusual love triangle in modern day Manhattan.

with the vibrant lights of the with the vibrant lights of the Manhattan cityscape, Ansatas Michos, director of photography, creates a place that - while it is so vast - seems only to revolve around the world of the three main characters. Yet the story, written by Stuart Blumberg, traces a congruous subtext of interpersonal relationships between a mother and her son. between a mother and her son, among two religious congrega-tions, and throughout common

perceptions of faith.

Dealing with serious issues of friendship, trust, faith and love, "Keeping The Faith" could've been a weighty film. But Norton and Blumberg kept the laughts coming with a blend of physical comedy, memorable characters and unexpected plot twists.

It's easy to feel for characters like handsome, charismatic Rabbi Jake and Father Brian, whose boyish charm and sensitivity appeals to everyone. Stiller ("There's Something About Mary") seems made for comedic croles, and runs with this opportunity to show off as the conficent rabbi. In his duel role, Norton proves himself worthy as a director with a vision that helped bring the film to life, and a character exhibiting all the purity of a trusting man of God. Known around the city as "The God Squad," and donning black leather, Brian and Jake breathenew life into their respective references. Rabbi Jake even goes so far as to bring in a Harlem gospel choir to get his crowd on its feet. While traditional religious leaders cringe, Jake and Brian preside over packed houses and plan to open an interfaith senior center complete with karacke.

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The world they seem to hold haracke.

The world they seem to hold harackes addicted to her cell phone, owns a badicted to her cell phone, owns a badicted to her cell phone, owns abdicted to her cell phone, forms into a woman of a vutherity with an undeniable wit and magnetism.

with an undeniable wit and mag-netism.
Somewhere between blind dates with overly-eager women in his congregation, Jake and Anna begin a casual affair. Ten-sions rise as the couple hide their budding romance from Brian and from Jake's mether, Ruth (portrayed brilliantly by Anne Bancroft). Ruth has already diseamed one son for marrying a Catholic girl. Jake doesn't want to risk falling out of her favor. But the truth comes out.

out. Meanwhile Brian begins to question his true faith with each friendly hug and kiss he receives from Anna. He reaches a point where he could envision giving up his life's work for her.

He doesn't take the nows lightly: Talk about a bad case of the third wheel, says Brian to Anna. I feel like I'm on some Aaron Spelling show – Melrose Priest. What happens will restore everyone's faith in love and life. Keeping the Faith' also introduces amusing secondary characters, including Ken Leung, as Don the karacke salesman. Hoping into a scene singing to Rick Springfield's hit about jenouey, "Jesses Girl." Don carns more than a few giggles. Brian

George portrays the Indian bartender that Brian confesses his strange tale to, with a steady stream of good-natured humor. Simple sight gags showing Father Brian setting himself on fire with incense lighten the dramn.

In the tradition of must-see modern romance classics, like "Sicepless in Scattle," Keeping The Faith' delights viewers with a realistic, open-mided, open-

Som Toolwo Faithfully friends: From left, Ben Stiller, Jenna Elfman and Edward Norton star in "Keeping The Faith." a film that tests the boundaries of friendship and religion.

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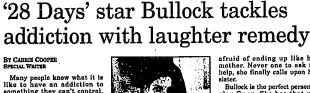
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CALAXY QUEST (PG)
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THE SIXTH SENSE (PG13)





Many people know what it is like to have an addiction to something they can't control. Their addictions come in several different forms such as food, alcohol or drugs. But one thing is consistent, they tend to keep their troubles to themselves. They work ask for help until it may be too late.

The dayk comedy "28 Days." a

They won't ask for help until it may be too late. The dark comedy "28 Days," a Columbia Pictures and Tall Trees Production, stars Sandra Bullock, Viggo Mortenson, Jominic West, Diane Ladd, Elizabeth Perkins and Stove Buscomi. It takes an inside look at the consequences of living life in the fast lane.

Director Betty Thomas, producer Jenno-Topping, and writer Susannah Grant, use an ensemble cast to take a look at life inside a rehabilitation center during the course of "28 Days."

In the film, Gwen Cummings (Sandra Eullock) is a New York writer attracted to life on the wild side. Her life consists of bar hopping and avoiding hangovers with continuous alcohol consumption and pain pills. Jasper (Dominic West of the film "A Midaummer Night's Dream"), is Gwen's drinking partner and partner in general. He's the charming, but bad news boyfriend always there to enhance Gwen's party girlimage.

image.
Life is great for Gwen until
she ruins her sister Lily's (Elizabeth Perkins) wedding and in a
drunken state wrecks the limousine. This earns her a Driving
While Under the Influence of
Alcohol violation and 28 days in
court-ordered relab. Not realizing that she has a problem, Gwen is shocked at the treatment she receives. She is

Laugh and cry: Sandra Bullock stars in "28 Days." a Columbia-TriStar Pic tures release in metro area theaters now.

not about to follow such rules as cleaning her room, chanting ritu-als, and emotional therapy ses-sions with an interesting mix of

patients.

Gwen becomes very cynical,
denies she has a problom, and
refuses to conform. Then she
meets Counselor Cernell (Steve
Buscemi known for "Reservoir
Dogs" and "Fargo"). Cornell, having had addiction problems in
the past, forces Gwen to take a
hard look at who she really is.

The cynicism fades as Gwen looks at her fellow rehab patients and etarts to renlize she is not alone. But the final straw occurs when she falls out of her window and injures her leg while trying to get the pain pills she those saws

three away.

As Gwen acknowledges her addiction, she finds herself struggling with the past and a mother who drank herself to death. Gwen realizes that she is

afraid of ending up like her mother. Never one to ask for help, she finally calls upon her sister.

sister.

Bullock is the perfect person to play Gwen. She has that girl next-door image, which goes show that no matter how nice or sweet a person is they can become an addict. Bullock also has the star power to draw people into the theater to see a movie they might not normally see.

Mortensen and West portrayed the two men in Gwen's life. Mortensen does a fine job as Eddie Boone, the star athlete addicted to sex. He is able to act as a jork, yet shows us his sensitive side. West's portrayal of Jasper shows he can be the bad boy, yet he is charming and sexy enough to be a likable addition to this cast.

But it is Gerhardt, the Gorman

but it is Gerhardt, the German stripper with a cocaine addic-tion, who steals the show Aian Tudyk of the film "Wonder Boys," nectrays Gerhardt and provides portrays Gerhardt and provides comic relief at just the right

times.
Azura Skyo, Michael O'Malley
and Marlanne Jean-Baptiste
round out the cast. These actors
provide great performances and
give a wider view of the world of
rehabilitation.

rehabilitation.

Addiction is a very serious matter and can be very depressing to watch. But "28 Days" takes a look this heavy situation with comedy, it does a nice job of exploring the "good" days and the "bad" in a rehab center and how it can repair your life.

Sure you can always "Just Say No," but for those who don't real-ize there is a problem, it's reas-suring to know help is out there.

Carrie Cooper is a contributor to Observer and Eccentric News-papers and a Troy resident.

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