

Next Goal Wins

USA | 2023 | 103m | PG
Director: Taika Waititi
Starring: Michael Fassbender, Oscar Kightley,
Kaimana, Frankie Adams

Today's surprise screening comes from the mind of one of cinema's most consistently vibrant and quirky filmmakers, Taika Waititi, who has had an enviable career in film and television, as an infectious fun presence both on-screen and off. His latest work aims to deliver the trademark wit, heart and poignancy that has defined his previous projects, this time taking its cue from real-world events.

Next Goal Wins, starring Michael Fassbender, Oscar Knightley, Kaimana, Elizabeth Moss and more, is based on the 2014 documentary of the same name, about the unlikely redemption of the American Samoan Football Team after their devastating 31-0 loss to Australia in 2001. Waititi told an interviewer 'I thought it was a story I had to tell and twist it,' opting to adapt the events to his own signature style, rather than retelling them beat for beat, while still retaining the documentary's title.

Adapting a true story that affected the lives of real people is a careful balancing act, where the filmmaker risks offending the subjects if they swing too far in either direction of accuracy or fantasy. Fortunately, the approach director and writer Waititi takes promises to pay respect to those who inspired the movie, while heightening their experiences with cinematic flair. This has resulted in a film that offers a hilarious yet touching tribute to the genuine heroes at the heart of its story.

It's the influence of real-life events that drives the film's political throughlines; while taking a light-hearted approach, Waititi has made sure to retain themes of empowerment, and provides a platform for voices which are often denied. A standout example of this comes in the form of the movie's breakout star Kaimana, who portrays transgender athlete Jaiyah Saelua, a fa'afafine – the third gender in Polynesian culture. Saelua became the first openly non-binary and trans woman to compete in a World Cup qualifying match, and Kaimana brings her to life with heart, humour, and ferocity.

This is a film that impresses with its ability to adapt real-world events into delightful cinematic form, with all the laughs, feels, and social commentary that portraying such a story entails.

'Waititi's winning, winsome film is his most accessible and mainstream movie to date, Marvel aside, one that successfully mixes in funny jokes with zeitgeisty social commentary,' BBC.

Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

Please detach this from your Film Note and drop it into the box or hand it in at the end of the screening. Thank you!

Did You Know?

- This has been a gestating project of Taika Waititi's for years and was shot before his most recently released film, *Thor: Love and Thunder*.
- Jaiyah Saelua has said she was 'really satisfied' with Kaimana's performance.
- The film underwent significant reshoots that recast one of its secondary characters.

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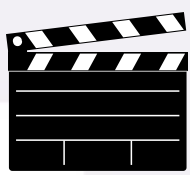
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