

Film Review: Bobcat Goldthwait's 'God Bless America' Takes Aim at Stupidity

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 11, 2012 - 12:32pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – While I'm writing this, a commercial for "My American Big Fat Gypsy Wedding" is playing on TV. It seems appropriate to kick off writing about a film that takes satirical aim at the bottom-feeding world of reality TV and the cult of personality that has devolved the 15-minute fame cycle into a 15-second one. I wish I could say that Bobcat Goldthwait's "God Bless America" is a complete success because there's a lot to like here but there are a few disappointing elements and the final act is a near-disaster dramatically. Still, star Joel Murray is SO good and Bobcat finds the sharp edge of his satirical gift often enough to warrant a look.

Murray ("Mad Men") does the best work of his career as Frank, a guy who hates his life enough to turn that hatred on the self-obsessed people who dominate the world of celebrities and the people who idolize them. You know those shows where spoiled teenage girls get birthday parties that cost more than the GDP of many countries? Or the way that music competition shows put untalented people on stage merely to mock them? How about the show like "TMZ" that fuel this unwarranted celebrity fire? After learning that he's got a tumor that will kill him and losing his job for sending flowers to a depressed receptionist, Frank snaps.



[Read Brian Tallerico's full review of "God Bless America" in our reviews section.](#) [9]

His first target is one of those soul-crushing girls who complains about the six-figure car she just got as her birthday present because it isn't the right model. Frank shoots her and Roxy (Tara Lynne Barr) watches it happen with a huge smile on her face. Wait, someone is going to take down the people who arguably do more harm than good in our civilization? Roxy wants in. And she doesn't just join Frank like Bonnie joined Clyde. She pushes him forward, suggesting targets and even stopping him from killing himself. If Frank is depression turned into rage, Roxy is pure anger unleashed.

It is through Roxy that Goldthwait the writer both gets to have the most fun and runs into the film's biggest problems. Roxy is a psychopath. Sure, she may be right that Diablo Cody is the "*only stripper who suffers from too much self-esteem*" or that "Glee" is bad for America, but her continuous criticism of the world around her overtakes the film to the point that Frank becomes too much of a secondary character. And Roxy becomes less and less likable to the point that she becomes difficult to root for in any way. Yes, I understand that she's supposed to be broadly painted in order for the satire to work but then Goldthwait fumbles the final arc of the character. I'm not going to spoil anything but Roxy doesn't work for me, especially given how I think we're supposed to feel about her during the ridiculous ending (which is clearly a place that Bobcat Goldthwait wanted to go as a filmmaker but that never feels like anyplace that Frank or Roxy would go as characters).



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"God Bless America" stars Joel Murray and Tara Lynne Barr. It was written and directed by Bobcat Goldthwait. It is available On Demand and opens in Chicago theaters on May 11, 2012.



God Bless America

Photo credit: Magnolia

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