

Film Review: Jake Gyllenhaal Turns Up His Power in 'Stronger'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 23, 2017 - 8:55am

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CHICAGO – The second major film about the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing (after last year's "Patriots Day") is "Stronger," and it wisely focuses on one individual rather than the bigger event. Jake Gyllenhaal portrays Jeff Bauman, a spectator near the explosion that lost both his legs.



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

There are two elements that position this film above Lifetime-Movie-of-the-Week territory... the unflinching look at a man recovering from losing both his legs while not having the resources that other people might have, and Jake Gyllenhaal's interpretation of that situation. Gyllenhaal is an actor's actor, using his instrument as a means to communicate beyond the dialogue. I don't know how Jeff Bauman is in real life, but if I had to guess based on Gyllenhaal's portrayal, it would be accurate to the real guy. Gyllenhaal's Jeff never panders, capitulates to false heroism or steps away from the negative parts of recovery, despite some questionable Boston stereotypes around him.

Jeff Bauman (Gyllenhaal) is a working class goof from Boston. He has an on-again/off again relationship with Erin (Tatiana Maslany). They are off again at the point that Erin decides to run the 2013 Boston Marathon. Jeff decides to surprise her at the finish line, and even constructs a sign cheering her on. As Erin approaches the finish, a bomb goes off.

Jeff is caught right near the blast point, and loses both his legs above the knee. The next couple of years is a recovery period, one that aided by his mother Patty (Miranda Richardson). Erin and he also reconnect, and she joins him at the small Bauman apartment. The period of healing is characterized by Jeff's confusion as to who he is post the attack, his flashbacks to the bombing, and his difficulties with his new relationship with Erin.

"Stronger" opens everywhere on September 22nd. Featuring Jake Gyllenhaal, Tatiana Maslany, Miranda Richardson, Richard Lane Jr and Kate Fitzgerald. Screenplay adapted by John Pollono, based on the memoir by Jeff Bauman. Directed by David Gordon Green. Rated "R"



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Tentative Thumbs Up from Jeff Bauman (Jake Gyllenhaal) in 'Stronger'
Photo credit: Roadside Attractions

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