

Rising Above Cancer in the Teen Dream 'Hope Springs Eternal'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 18, 2018 - 1:16pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The topic of cancer is rarely heroic, and as we know mostly concludes tragically. But the new teen comedy “Hope Springs Eternal” turns the Big C on its ear, and features up-and-coming young actor Mia Rose Frampton to take it on. The film is light and breezy, with nods to John Hughes, absurdist teen indoctrinations and the celebration of music in life.

Written with a nice light balance by Stephanie Mickus (her debut) and directed by Chicagoan Jack C. Newell, “Hope Springs Eternal” is tight storytelling and brisk comedy. Frampton keeps it alive with her expressive optimism in the main role, and is able to handle both the light and darkness of the “C” without being maudlin. The cast is top drawer and seems to be having a good time... the highlight being a Hughes-like “mean girl” coterie who have a habit of dressing alike. This is a great cheer-us-up film, especially if there is a struggle in life with the nature of an insidious disease.

Hope (Mia Rose Frampton) is a high school senior who has been living with cancer since she was 12 years old. In the step-by-step process of treatment, she has eschewed any everyday chore... like school, routine mendacity and life. She constantly blames the disease on her foibles, until she gets some astounding news... the cancer has gone into remission. What becomes a celebratory moment for her mother (Beth Lacke) becomes a dilemma for Hope.



The Title Character (Mia Rose Frampton) in 'Hope Springs Eternal'

Photo credit: Samuel Goldwyn Films

It seems that all the bounty of her life, including her Aussie boyfriend Kai (Beau Brooks) and attention from popular girl Zoe (Lauren Giraldo), is the result of her fellow teen dreamers feeling sorry for her. She keeps the I'm-dying illusion going, even though it distresses her boy "friend" Seth (Stony Blyden) and cancer ward bestie Sarah (Juliette Angelo). Hope needs to learn to swim in the mainstream again.

Mia Rose Frampton (yep, she's Peter's daughter), made a memorable film debut as the bratty teen who challenges Kristin Wiig in "Bridemaids." She owns Hope, both the character and the film, and strikes that perfect momentum between the darkness of the C and the lightness of the dilemma. She emotes and does well-timed comedy in equal measure, and has a nice long career ahead of her. She and her Australian bf (Brooks is in a notable YouTube comedy troupe from Melbourne) are particularly funny together, as they mangle the first blush of coupling.

Director Newell gets the most out of his notable cast, including a fine cameo from fellow Chicagoan Tim Kazurinsky ("Saturday Night Live") as a burnt-out educator. All of the players have a good sense of what they are doing, which is unusual in lower budgeted films. The mother, the mean girls, Zoe, the "just friends" boy and the hunky school counselor (Pej Vahdat) all parlay their moments into the mix, and avoid the clunkiness of stereotyping any of those roles.



An Aussie Teen (Beau Brooks) in ‘Love’ in ‘Hope Springs Eternal’
Photo credit: Samuel Goldwyn Films

Another welcome surprise is the use of music in the film, in singalong montages and a brilliant celebration music video at the end. Some of the mean girls are made up of the pop singing group Cimorelli (sisters from California) and the production takes wise advantage of it. Some of the cancer stuff is a bit awkward, but when scenario writer Stephanie Mickus chose the topic, it concluded with a positivity that needed a little awkwardness at first.

The future is bright for Frampton, Newell and Mickus. These are talents that are evolving through “Hope Springs Eternal,” and they created an energy in the film that allows them to bring to life a “title,” that in this case, rises above the cliché.

“Hope Springs Eternal” is in theaters nationwide and available for digital download. See local listings/internet for theaters, showtimes and download availability. Featuring Mia Rose Frampton, Stony Blyden, Beth Lacke, Juliette Angelo, Beau Brooks, LaRoyce Hawkins, Lauren Giraldo and Tim Kazurinsky. Written by Stephanie Mickus. Directed by Jack C. Newell. Rated “PG”



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