

## ‘Kin’ Overcomes Early Portrayal Issues to Score Big

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The concept of “family” has been romanticized to death in the movies in the last generation, coinciding with the increasing decline of actual togetherness. The new film “Kin” is essentially about family, but it also is about otherworldly weaponry, gritty crime lords and the old on-the-road story.

Newcomers Josh and Jonathan Baker – twin brother filmmakers – focused on the family dynamic of three males from Detroit, who without their dead wife/mother seems destined for dereliction, even with the influence of a honorable working class Dad. The twist is that the youngest son – an adopted African boy in a white family – has discovered a weapon, not of this earth, that only he can discharge. When his older brother and he hit the road, there are many factions out to get them, but the weapon itself becomes a saving grace. The whole story works as it evolves, despite some weakly drawn characters, and the last quarter of the film is almost classic.

Eli (introducing Myles Truitt) is rummaging around an old factory in Detroit, looking for scrap wire to sell. He comes upon what looks to have been a shoot-out, with several armor clad individuals dead. One of the discarded weapons fits neatly into Eli’s hands, so he takes it home, where his father (Dennis Quaid) is anticipating the return of his brother Jimmy (Jack Reynor) from prison.



Eli (Myles Truitt, center) Anchors a Stellar Cast in ‘Kin’

*Photo credit: Lionsgate*

Father and prodigal Jimmy clash, mostly because the son owes a crime lord named Taylor (a hammy James Franco) 60K for his prison protection, and Dad is also angry at Eli, when he discovers his pilfered wiring scam. It doesn't get any better when Jimmy and Taylor decides to rob his father's work site for the money, but the heist goes wrong, so Jimmy grabs Eli (who brings his weapon) to escape. They hit the road, and collect a stripper named Milly (Zoë Kravitz) along the way.

Obviously there is a lot of exposition in the front end of the film, but the characters are given easy characteristics with little depth. Dad is stoic and inflexible, Eli is shy and low key, Jimmy is a twitchy ex-con and Franco is redoing his "Spring Breakers" crime persona with a lesser script. Even Zoë Kravitz portrays the "stripper with the heart of gold" as if she's in a 1940s studio picture. But it all comes down to who is chasing them (Taylor and a mysterious faction who owns Eli's weapon) and the weapon itself. Eli becomes the kid in the candy store as he is the only one who can use it, and it helps them and the story to keep moving.

This is where the switch occurs, and takes the film into a different mode. It is the mystery behind the weapon that comes to the forefront, and because Eli is knighted with its use, he looms large in the grander scope of what the film is communicating. There is some real excitement and beauty in the last quarter of the film, even in the power of the weapon. Sitting through the machinations of "Dad" and the "Crime Lord" seemed to have little purpose in the beginning, until it all makes more sense in the end.





Spring Franco: James F. as Taylor in ‘Kin’

Photo credit: Lionsgate

[In an interview with HollywoodChicago.com.](#) [20]the twin Baker boys related how the movie went from short film to screen in three scant years. I think the producers are smelling franchise in the way the story flowed, and it was necessary to relate the origins in the fastest manner possible. What was given up in early character development was realized in a new style of sci-fi action film, one that also contains a new hope (excuse me) for future explorations... both in use of special effect creation and possible new worlds.

Now there are “families” in every manner of film plot... “The Fast and the Furious” series, the recent shark movie “The Meg” and every Dwayne “Rock” Johnson disaster movie of the month. Can’t there be another motivation? What’s wrong with a stripper without a heart of gold, if you get my Toyko Drift? Now That’s Entertainment!

*“Kin” opens everywhere on August 31st. Featuring Dennis Quaid, James Franco, Zoë Kravitz, Jack Reynor and Myles Truitt. Screenplay by Daniel Casey, based on the short film “Bag Man.” Directed by Josh and Jonathan Baker.*



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