

'Riding the wave'

Surfers grow up in touching docu 'Momentum Generation'

By Eddie Pells

The day surfing lost one of its most beloved rabble-rousers was the day it rediscovered its soul.

That's one of the many takeaways from "Momentum Generation", a beautifully melancholy documentary that is, at its core, about surfers, but speaks every bit as fluently about friendship, loyalty and the price people are willing – or not willing – to pay to be the best at what they do.

This is not simply a movie for surfing fans, the likes of which populated the fringe, action-sports landscape in the 1990s and helped make most of the real-life protagonists in this 2018 film (fairly) rich and (largely) famous.

Using decades-old footage from surfing filmmaker Taylor Steele's voluminous archives, directors Jeff and Michael Zimbalist (The Two Escobars, Favela Rising) take viewers on a ride through the waves that starts on the North Shore of Oahu, where a teenage group of preternaturally talented surfers, some of them from broken homes, gather and begin bonding.

They are not-so-gently schooled by the rabble-rouser, Todd Chesser. Chesser is a daredevil, an older-brother figure who throws these boys in with the sharks, while keeping a sharp pin prick at the ready to slap down anyone who shows even the faintest sign of thinking he's bigger

than the game.

Chesser's ethos helps transform the boys into men and, somehow, they manage to stay friends while also becoming fierce competitors, ganging up to knock Australia's pro-surfing dynasty off its pedestal.

All is well for the young Americans until 1995. The best in the sport is Kelly Slater. His nearest rival is also his best friend, Rob Machado, who, decades later, spent nearly six years collaborating with his manager and others to get this movie made.

Relationship

As their dream season pushes forward, the relationship between Slater and Machado grows tense. The crescendo comes during a season-ending contest at which Machado and Slater are going mano a mano in a heat that will decide who wins the season-long world championship. Toward the end of the riveting back-and-forth duel, Machado rolls out early from a wave and gives Slater, who is waiting there, a possibly ill-timed high-five that seems to indicate all is forgiven, no matter who wins.

That high-five changed a lot. The movie goes into detail about the whats and whys, but suffice it to say that nearly a quarter-century after the event, the debate over what really happened lingers.

"In my recollection, the heat had already been dictated, and basically, that was irrelevant," Machado said in an interview this week with

The Associated Press. "It didn't really matter."

Maybe not that day. But Slater won. In the aftermath, he went on to become the most successful pro surfer in history, while Machado's competitive career was never the same.

Neither, however, emerged unscathed by Chesser's death less than 15 months later; he was killed while surfing a wild wave on Oahu's Outside Alligators.

The tragedy forces everyone in this testosterone-charged world to reckon with his demons: abusive and absent parents; drug and alcohol addiction; fraying friendships; the fallout from years of hyper-competitiveness, the residue of which can't forever be tamped down with a friendly postgame drink.

"Who won?" Taylor Knox says in the movie, possibly realizing how late he was in solving the ultimate question that stares down pro surfers. "To me, it's the one having the most fun."

That's not an uncommon refrain in the action-sports world. Though never mentioned in the movie, the specter of the Olympics looms throughout. It's impossible to watch without acknowledging surfing's upcoming Olympic debut – set for next summer in Japan – along with the baggage that mainstream acceptance brings with it. Slater, still fit at age 47 and not officially retired, could very well represent America on the waves in Tokyo. (AP)

Variety



This image released by Netflix shows Sandra Bullock in a scene from the film 'Bird Box'. (AP)

Film

Boyle's 'Yesterday' selected as Tribeca closing night film

A tearjerking drama in 'Five Feet'

By Andrew Barker

A tearjerking romance centered around two teenagers living with cystic fibrosis, first-time feature director Justin Baldoni's "Five Feet Apart" is ultimately little more than a cover band treatment of "The Fault in Our Stars". But as far as cover bands go, at least it has a hell of a frontwoman in Haley Lu Richardson. Fresh off of memorable supporting parts in "The Edge of Seventeen" and "Support the Girls", Richardson gives a star turn every bit as charismatic and assured as the film is formulaic and forgettable, bringing soul, style and nuance to a character that could have easily been a condescending caricature.

An exceptional talent in a sea of well-meaning adequacy, Richardson plays Stella, a bright, wryly optimistic high schooler who has been dealing with cystic fibrosis since childhood. When we meet her, she's just landed in the hospital for yet another extended stay, and wastes no time decorating every inch of her room, organizing her pills into perfect color-coded rows, and putting together detailed to-do lists for each day. Designing apps from bed and livestreaming her treatment sessions as she waits for a lung transplant, she's turned her corner of the hospital into something of a second home, maintaining a running dialogue with maternal head nurse Barb (Kimberly Hebert Gregory) and her deferential gay best friend Poe (Moises Arias), a fellow longtime patient.

But this time, there's a new kid in the ward: Sarcastic, vaguely rebellious, smolderingly handsome Will (Cole Sprouse) has arrived to undergo an experimental clinical trial, and his cavalier attitude toward his own treatment raises the hyper-disciplined Stella's hackles. Of course, the film conspires to thrust them together almost immediately, and they warm to one another through a hurried on-again-off-again courtship, striking quid-pro-quo deals, FaceTiming each other well into the night, and inevitably hitting

speed bumps as they brush up against each another's secrets and traumas.

There is, however, a much bigger obstacle to their relationship than the typical rom-com crises: "CFers", as the characters refer to themselves, are perpetually told to observe the "six-foot rule", keeping a safe distance from other people with cystic fibrosis to avoid cross-infection. This is a particular concern when it comes to Will, who is infected with the dangerous bacteria *B. cepacia*, vastly increasing the risk to Stella should she get too close to him. So not only is their budding romance haunted by the very real specter of early mortality, they can't even hold hands, let alone kiss.

(In case you're wondering why the film is titled "Five Feet Apart" when the rules call for six, the script does eventually offer a reason for the missing foot. It doesn't, however, make a whole lot of sense.)

Screenplay

The screenplay, written by Mikki Daughtry and Tobias Iaconis, can't help but clutter up the works with contrivances and clunky dialogue throughout. The film's handling of Poe falls back on some rather unfortunate "gay best friend" tropes that one might have hoped we'd long since left behind, and its soap-opera third act offers a jarring pileup of melodramatic twists, some of which drew literal guffaws from the teenage members of an early screening audience. But the film's middle passage is able to generate genuine sweetness, largely due to Richardson's low-key magnetism.

When the hesitant couple finally steals away to go on a date (holding a pool cue between them to keep their distance, as well as to serve as a source of surrogate contact) Baldoni cultivates some real sparks, and even a hint of chastely sensual heat, despite rarely leaving the hospital setting. It's in these scenes – much more so than in its well-intentioned but quasi-academic sequences explaining the challenges of cystic fibrosis – that "Five Feet

Apart" manages to humanize the effects of the disease most tangibly and affectingly. If only the rest of the film had followed suit, it might have risen to the level of its star.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: The world premiere of **Danny Boyle's** rock comedy "Yesterday" has been selected as the closing night film for the Tribeca Film Festival on May 5.

The festival, which opens April 24 with "The Apollo", also announced Thursday that it will hold a pair of Gala Anniversary screenings with a 40th anniversary showing of a never-before-seen restored version of **Francis Ford Coppola's** "Apocalypse Now", and the 30th anniversary and cast reunion of "Say Anything..."

Tribeca also announced that it will host the world premiere of "Between Me and My Mind" about Phish lead singer **Trey Anastasio**, followed by performance by the **Trey Anastasio Band** at the Beacon Theatre, as well as Tribeca/ESPN Sports Film Festival opener "The Good, The Bad, The Hungry".

The festival, now in its 18th year, said Thursday that the previously announced 25th anniversary of "Reality Bites" will feature appearances by director **Ben Stiller**, writer **Helen Childress**, with cast including **Ethan Hawke**, **Winona Ryder**, **Janeane Garofalo**, and **Steve Zahn**. Tribeca will also hold a free showing of 1977's "Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope".

Universal is opening "Yesterday" on June 28. The film, scripted by **Richard Curtis**, stars **Himesh Patel** (BBC's "Eastenders") as a struggling singer-songwriter in a tiny English seaside town whose dreams of fame are rapidly fading, despite the support of his childhood best friend, played by **Lily James**. After a freak accident during a mysterious global blackout, he wakes up to discover that **The Beatles** have never existed. **Kate McKinnon** and **Ed Sheeran** also star. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Disney's "Captain Marvel" continues to dominate the international box office, generating \$119 million from 54 foreign markets.

The superhero tentpole opened in its final territory, **Japan**, this weekend, where it brought in \$5.6 million. In **North America**, "Captain Marvel" generated \$69 million in its second outing for a global weekend haul of \$189 million.

Overseas, "Captain Marvel" crossed \$494 million in ticket sales, exceeding the lifetime grosses of superhero movies such as "Ant-Man and the Wasp" (\$406 million), "Wonder Woman" (\$409 million), "Spider-Man 2" (\$410 million), "Deadpool 2" (\$460 million), and "Guardians of the Galaxy: Vol 2" (\$474 million). It is already the 17th-highest grossing superhero release ever at the international box office. Globally, it has surpassed \$760 million.

Meanwhile, Universal and DreamWorks' "How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World" amassed another \$9.4 million from 66 markets, taking its international bounty to a mighty \$330.9 million. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: **Alan Tudyk** has signed on to voice Iago, the scarlet macaw parrot sidekick to the villain Jafar in Disney's live-action "Aladdin", which opens May 24.

Tudyk has voiced characters in six different Disney animated movies, starting with "Wreck-It Ralph" in 2012, followed by "Frozen" as the Duke of Weselton, "Big Hero 6", "Zootopia" as Duke Weaselton and "Ralph Breaks the Internet" as Knowsmore. He also appeared in Disney's "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story", in which he played the droid K-2SO.

Gilbert Gottfried voiced Iago – named after the villain of **William Shakespeare's** "Othello" – as a wisecracking and easily frustrated character, saying at one point, "Look at this! I'm so ticked off that I'm molting!"

Disney unveiled the first full-length trailer for Disney's "Aladdin" on Tuesday with **Mena Massoud's** street urchin using one of his three wishes from the

Genie's magic lamp to become royalty. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: New Mexico production shingle Zafiro Cinema, launched by Machete Prods founder **Edher Campos** and Bolivian producer **Gabriela Maire** late last year, is gearing up to make its first film, "Perros"



Tudyk



Gottfried

("Dogs"), written and to be directed by Chilean director **Vinko Tomicic**.

Chilean thesp **Alfredo Castro**, who broke out internationally in **Pablo Larrain's** films and then **Lorenzo Vigas' Venice Golden Lion** winner "From Afar" ("Desde Alla"), will play opposite a yet-to-be-discovered non-pro from **La Paz, Bolivia**.

This will be Tomicic's sophomore feature. His debut film "Cockroach" ("Fumigador"), co-directed with **Francisco Hevia**, won the best film at the 2016 Santiago International Film Festival (Sanfic) among others.

Tomicic is currently polishing his script at the Cannes Festival's Cinefondation Residence

program in Paris, one of two Chilean filmmakers selected for its 38th session.

Set to begin shooting later this year in La Paz on an estimated \$450,000 budget, "Perros" turns on a shoeshine boy in the Bolivian capital who, like his peers, wears a ski mask out of shame for what is considered the lowliest job on the streets. (RTRS)