

American Dreamz (2006)

Rated PG-13. Our ratings: V-3; L-2; S/N-4. Running time: 1 hour 47 min.

Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a foul odour;

so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honour.

*The heart of the wise inclines to the right,
but the heart of a fool to the left.*

*Even when fools walk on the road, they lack sense,
and show to everyone that they are fools.*

*If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave
your post,*

for calmness will undo great offences.

*There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as great an
error as if it proceeded from the ruler:*

*Folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low
place.*

Ecclesiastes 10:1- 6

An inept suicide bomber; a notAmerican Dreamz overly bright U.S. President discovering the pleasure in reading newspapers; and a popular TV show suspiciously like "American Idol." Such are the targets of Paul Weitz's film, which he both wrote and directed. The satire is somewhat mild, but there are some laughs and a bit of suspense this very timely film.

Dennis Quaid is the recently elected President Staton, but suddenly so down in the polls that he does not want to face the public. He has discovered newspapers and learned that they

are "full of stuff" that he finds interesting. His Chief of staff (Willem Dafoe, made up to look like VP Cheney) is so desperate to draw his boss out of his bedroom retreat that he manages to book Staton on the season finale of the country's most popular TV show "American Dreamz" to show that the Prez is a regular guy.

Martin Tweed, the show's host, played in a slightly sleazy way that Hugh Grant has perfected over the years, is only too glad for Staton to join him, as this will boost his ratings. But his real attention is on the recently discovered singer Sally Kendoo (Mandy Moore), screaming her head off in the tape made by the show's team that came to her house to tell her she has won a spot on the series. The lustful host likes what he sees when he meets Sally, and she indicates that she might live up to her last name if Tweed would seek more than a professional relationship with her. She has already dumped her longtime boyfriend, telling him that he cannot follow where she is going.

We see another future candidate for the show in far off Afghanistan, where Omer Obeidi (Sam Golzari) is ruining virtually every take of a terrorist training video. He cannot get over the wooden wall, nor swing across the overhead parallel bars. Equally bad, in his tent at night he practices singing Broadway show tunes played on the decrepit record player once owned by his music-loving mother. It is because of her that he has decided to become a terrorist—she was killed by a stray American bomb. His trainers decide that Omer is an unfit fighter, but a good candidate to become a suicide bomber. By a bizarre twist of fate, when he comes to live with relatives in America, he becomes a candidate on "American Dreamz." His handlers set him up with a bomb to be detonated when the President joins him on stage at the season finale of the program. How all this works out makes for amusing, even suspenseful, viewing.

For Reflection/Discussion

1) What do you think of the TV series satirized by the film? Why do you think the show is so popular? Do you think it is manipulative?

2) What do you think of Sally Kendoo and the host Martin Tweed? What have they sold their souls to? How does her treatment of boyfriend William Williams (Chris Klein) show this? Of Tweed's advice to her to take the boy back? How does Sally's mother Martha Kendoo (Jennifer Coolidge) fit in to the story?

3) Were you comfortable with the way in which the U.S. President is depicted? How is this different from the way our Chief Executive is usually portrayed? Do you think this is a healthy sign in a democracy? How is the film's showing the President's discovering the pleasure of reading a newspaper an optimistic view of human nature?

4) Were you surprised by the ending of the film? What kind of a person do you think Sally will become? Similar to Tweedy? American Dreamz Rated PG-13. Our ratings: V-3; L-2; S/N-4. Running time: 1 hour 47 min.

Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a foul odour; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honour.

The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of a fool to the left.

Even when fools walk on the road, they lack sense, and show to everyone that they are fools.

If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post, for calmness will undo great offences.

There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as great an error as if it proceeded from the ruler: Folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place.

Ecclesiastes 10:1- 6

An inept suicide bomber; a not overly bright U.S. President discovering the pleasure in reading newspapers; and a popular TV show suspiciously like "American Idol." Such are the targets of Paul Weitz's film, which he both wrote and directed. The satire is somewhat mild, but there are some laughs and a bit of suspense this very timely film.

Dennis Quaid is the recently elected President Staton, but suddenly so down in the polls that he does not want to face the public. He has discovered newspapers and learned that they are "full of stuff" that he finds interesting. His Chief of staff (Willem Dafoe, made up to look like VP Cheney) is so desperate to draw his boss out of his bedroom retreat that he manages to book Staton on the season finale of the country's most popular TV show "American Dreamz" to show that the Prez is a regular guy.

Martin Tweed, the show's host, played in a slightly sleazy way that Hugh Grant has perfected over the years, is only too glad for Staton to join him, as this will boost his ratings. But his real attention is on the recently discovered singer Sally Kendoo (Mandy Moore), screaming her head off in the tape made by the show's team that came to her house to tell her she has won a spot on the series. The lustful host likes what he sees when he meets Sally, and she indicates that she might live up to her last name if Tweed would seek more than a professional relationship with her. She has already dumped her longtime boyfriend, telling him that he cannot follow where she is going.

We see another future candidate for the show in far off Afghanistan, where Omer Obeidi (Sam Golzari) is ruining virtually every take of a terrorist training video. He cannot get over the wooden wall, nor swing across the overhead parallel bars. Equally bad, in his tent at night he practices singing Broadway show tunes played on the decrepit record

player once owned by his music-loving mother. It is because of her that he has decided to become a terrorist—she was killed by a stray American bomb. His trainers decide that Omer is an unfit fighter, but a good candidate to become a suicide bomber. By a bizarre twist of fate, when he comes to live with relatives in America, he becomes a candidate on “American Dreamz.” His handlers set him up with a bomb to be detonated when the President joins him on stage at the season finale of the program. How all this works out makes for amusing, even suspenseful, viewing.

For Reflection/Discussion

1) What do you think of the TV series satirized by the film? Why do you think the show is so popular? Do you think it is manipulative?

2) What do you think of Sally Kendoo and the host Martin Tweed? What have they sold their souls to? How does her treatment of boyfriend William Williams (Chris Klein) show this? Of Tweed’s advice to her to take the boy back? How does Sally’s mother Martha Kendoo (Jennifer Coolidge) fit in to the story?

3) Were you comfortable with the way in which the U.S. President is depicted? How is this different from the way our Chief Executive is usually portrayed? Do you think this is a healthy sign in a democracy? How is the film’s showing the President’s discovering the pleasure of reading a newspaper an optimistic view of human nature?

4) Were you surprised by the ending of the film? What kind of a person do you think Sally will become? Similar to Tweedy?