

Band Aid (2017)

Rated R. Running time: 1 hour min. 31.

Our content ratings (1-10): Violence 1; Language 8; Sex 6/Nudity 4.

Our star rating (1-5): 4

It is honorable to refrain from strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

Proverbs 20:3

Zoe Lister-Jones is multi-talented. She wrote, directed, produced *Band Aid*, and co-wrote the lyrics for its songs, as well as starring in this dramedy that focuses upon domestic strife. After watching her film, sometimes hilarious, but its humor always on-target, I was saddened that its deservedly hard R rating will limit its usefulness for religious groups—except for those young adults who can easily overlook the nude love scenes and excessively foul language.

Anna (Lister-Jones) feels unfulfilled because the failure of a past book deal has forced her to earn money by driving for Uber. Husband Ben (Adam Pally) is an unsuccessful visual artist loafing around their apartment in his underwear smoking pot and taking on occasional Photoshop jobs. Their enforced close living and vocation failures lead to frequent quarrels about a multitude of things, the most frequent arguments being Ben's refusal to do his share of dish washing. It looks they will be heading for a divorce until they attend the birthday party of their friends' child. Under the spell of the weed they are smoking, they find themselves laughing while playing together some of the toy instruments.

This sparks an idea, in that both did play real instruments in high school. Why not turn their angry retorts at each other

into songs? Almost before they know it, they have dug their guitars out of storage and come up with a song—and find themselves enjoying the process and the result. Anna belts out a diatribe that once would have sent Ben up a wall, but as a lyric makes him smile instead. Their weird neighbor Dave (Fred Armisen) is drawn by the sound to their garage, and soon they are pleading with him to serve as their drummer. Despite his strange sex life, this proves to be a good choice—not only is he a talented drummer, but he also becomes a moderating influence on them when their bickering spills over from the songs, threatening again their relationship. It is appropriate that their turning to music to heal their sick marriage leads them to call the band Band Aid.

After a funny struggle with the mic that seems stuck in Anna's mouth, Band Aid is well received by the young adults during a club's weekly open mic night. But will a successful music career bring real healing, or will it be like applying a band aid over a cancer sore? Aided by some sage advice from Ben's mother (Susie Essman), who at first comes across as a nasty mother-in-law, the pair slowly grope toward a degree of maturity. During this period the pair slowly bring to the surface a major source of their discontent and pain, one which had been too distressful for them to confront openly.

The drama and humor, including a crack about the Holocaust, depict well a secular Jewish couple's struggle to save their marriage, both discovering that a healthy relationship is hard work. That they are willing to do so rather than taking the easy way out of divorce or adultery is the good news of this film. Probably too raunchy, and too accepting of casual drug use for many people of faith, it nonetheless could evoke some insightful discussion of marriage as well as provide an hour and a half of laughter.

This review with a set of questions will be in the 2017 issue of VP.

