



COURAGEOUS is a third quarter 2017 LVCA dvd donation to the Hugh Stoupe Memorial Library of the Heritage United Methodist Church of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that dvd film.

9 of a possible 20 points

** of a possible *****

United States 2011 color 129 minutes live action feature drama
Tristar Pictures / Sherwood Pictures / Provident Films / Affirm Films /
Alabama Production Group Producers: Stephen Kendrick, Larry Frenzel,
Dennis Wiemer

Key: *indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance

(j) designates a juvenile performer

Points:

- 1 Director: Alex Kendrick 2nd Unit Director: Jon Erwin
- 1 Editors: Bill Ebel, Steve Hullfish, Alex Kendrick
- 1 Cinematographer: Bob Scott
- Still Photographers: Hayley Catt, Todd Stone
- 1 Lighting: Keith Slade, Kristopher Kimlin
- 2 Written by: Alex Kendrick, Stephen Kendrick
- Script Supervisor: Holly Stiegel
- 0 Music: Mark Willard
- Music Recording: Melissa Matthey, David Schober
- Orchestrations: B. J. Davis, Stephen Hand, Bradley Knight
- 1 Production Designers: Darian Corley, Sheila McBride
- Set Decorator: Sheila McBride

Props: Steve Dapper

Costume Designer: Terri Catt

Makeup: Curry Bushnell (Head of Department), Mary Smit

0 Sound Designer / Sound Editor: Nick Palladino

Sound Editors: Brian Straka, J. T. Dekker

Sound Mixers: Rob Whitehurst, Kevin Daughtry

Casting: Bill Shafer, Mandy Chambers, Amy Parr

1 Acting

1 Creativity

9 total points

Cast: Ken Bevel (Nathan Hayes), Alex Kendrick (Adam Mitchell), Kevin Downes (Shane Fuller), Renee Jewell (Victoria Mitchell), Rusty Martin (Dylan Mitchell), Lauren Etchells (j)* (Emily Mitchell), Ben Davies (David Thomson), Robert Amaya (Javier Martinez), Angelita Nelson (Carmen Martinez), Taylor Hutcherson (Jade Hayes), Eleanor Brown (Kayla Hayes), T. C. Stallings (T. J.), Matt Hardwick (Antoine), Kaleb Bevel (j) (Baby Hayes), Ellie Zapata (j) (Isabel Martinez), Evan Zapata (j) (Marcos Martinez), Christian Dozier (j) (Jordan Hayes), Mark Walker (Construction Boss), Brett Kirkland (Mr. Simms), Mark Glow (Sheriff), Stephen Ostrander (Muster Room Sergeant), Donald Howze (Derrick), Cheryl Douglass (Adam's Mother), Bill Douglass (Adam's Father), Becky Williams (Victoria's Mother), Steve Willimas (Victoria's Father), Lauren Atkins (Older Emily), Ed Litton (Pastor Rogers), J. Craig Dodd (Captain at Drug Bust), Joshua Kendrick (j) (Tyler Fuller), Daniel Simmons (William Barrett), Karis Kendrick (Olivia, daughter of Shane and Mia), Dee Kelley (Mia, Shane's ex-wife), others

Another installment of a series of spiritually-oriented films from Sherwood Pictures and Affirm Films / Provident Films, COURAGEOUS tackles the topic of failing fatherhood. Unfortunately, the Kendrick Brothers climb behind the pulpit again and sermonize blatantly. Forgetting their job is to show a story, not merely underline a moral. Insertions of super octane drug busts as preface and climax turn attention away from family considerations to action movie

gunbursts and car chases. Stock material for contemporary movies, yet poor substitutes for character development.

Killing off one of the finest performers in the cast at an early stage is an egregious error. Interpolating travails of a Latino family smacks repulsively of politically correct minority representation. It unduly complicates the story plot, making it necessary to interweave journeyman carpenter / wallpaperer / factory worker Javier's woes with those of the protagonist and his partner. Sending a friendly, witty, family-focused cop to jail while negligent papa Adam gets a free pass to play hero confounds audience expectations and very nearly derails the entire movie. Alex Kendrick doesn't seem to want to portray the heavy in his films, preferring a characterization combining pastoral pomposity and Bible-quoting counseling. All attempts at realism are undermined by that approach, resulting in a movie with good intentions and arrogantly self-righteous pontificating.

The muddled result is best summarized in a line possibly mangled in delivery where the Nathan Hayes character tells his screen daughter she's lucky God gave her him for a dad. While that may be true, it isn't an appropriate introduction to the ring he then presents. In fact, Nathan indicates a degree of parental possessiveness downright repulsive to watch. Truly strong parents know when to give their children room to make decisions for themselves. They don't insist on being control freaks playing commander-in-chief at home. Granted, policemen may be more than slightly tempted to do so as an outgrowth of daily routines at work.

A patriarchal power bias is evident throughout the movie, women and girls being treated as property requiring male protection, consigned exclusively to housekeeping duties.

Black males are empowered if they work in the law enforcement field or as lay preachers. The rest are portrayed as gang members and career criminals, less dependable than Hispanics and far lazier.

If a viewer can push aside these glaring stereotypes, intricate plotting of events offers additional challenges. As the story begins, in totally unbelievable fashion, a police officer between job assignments fills up his car's gas tank. Then leaves the driver side car door open with the engine running as he walks off to

find materials for windshield cleaning. Momentarily, the windshield is more important than the safety of his infant son inside the vehicle. Hmmm. This guy is going to be in the front line of community security?

Being partly a cops and robbers picture, COURAGEOUS jump starts when a young black male seizes his golden opportunity to commandeer the driverless pick-up. Nathan belatedly observes its theft. He dashes over and grabs for control of the steering wheel, taking advantage of a running board for some semblance of balance. Miraculously, he battles the thief over the course of several blocks of travel, hanging on successfully in spite of all efforts by an aggressive driver to push him loose. Dodging oncoming vehicles by means of serendipitous interventions staving off collision, the vehicle ultimately skids into a tree. Only in the aftermath of that wreck are viewers made aware Nathan's infant son is still inside. Which presumably explains the otherwise unnatural life-jeopardizing efforts of his father.

Soon contrasting styles of parenting are presented.

Patrolman Adam Mitchell is a disciplinarian provider, addicted to overtime and averse to jogging. He dotes on his daughter but leaves a teen son to fend for himself.

Nathan spends free hours apparently at barbecues and dinners with other members of his police team. For him, model parenting consists of an occasional superhero stint on the highway and dictation to his two older children about what each may and may not do. There's no court of appeal in his house. It's Dad's way or no way. Mrs. Hayes seconds this authoritarian regimen.

Shane Fuller, divorced and eager to overcompensate for time lost with a preteen son, is more at ease around children than other fathers depicted. He alone employs humor, actually listening to what kids say. Making him a much better partner for nine-year-old Emily Mitchell than real father Adam, who refuses to dance with the girl and ritually absents himself from her recitals.

Javier Martinez, who takes everything in life far too seriously, makes promises to his children he is never shown redeeming. His idea of a good bedtime story for them is a report on Dad's providential breaks. Never once does he even begin to examine how their day has fared. Must be his spouse's

job. He'll separate scrappers and bring home paychecks. That's about the extent of his parental involvement.

Then there's David Thomson, whose unacknowledged four-year-old daughter and her mother have been cast aside as unwanted baggage. He begins to suspect he just might have some responsibility for the child's upbringing after the death of another preadolescent girl brings home how fragile life is.

A seventeen-year-old youth tries to court Jade, Nathan's fifteen-year-old daughter. Derrick's obviously in need of guidance from someone. So he attempts gang membership to resolve the problem of who should direct him. That leads to bloodshed, bruises, and betrayal. Nathan then considers intervention in his case. Very belatedly. After all, the kid isn't part of his family. Yet.

The all-important bond connecting five fathers is a pledge each signs to follow Biblical principles in child rearing. This in itself is not a bad thing to do. Keeping those promises is more difficult. Especially when one of the group finds an annual remuneration of more than thirty thousand dollars too meager to support himself and his one-third of income alimony payments. Deciding to supplement wages with side sales of interdicted smuggled drugs, this patrolman father winds up in jail.

By overlooking implausibilities and a raft of prejudices, audiences can find some virtues in **COURAGEOUS**. Alex Kendrick has a powerful and sincere vocal delivery. Lauren Etchells's invigoratingly natural acting is engaging. Many points stressed in the screenplay about adult responsibility are valid.

On the other hand, there are three major flaws of the movie: a lead performer inclined to overact in scenes of sorrow, muggings of Robert Amaya's Javier, and underutilization of Rusty Martin as Dylan Mitchell, Adam's introverted teenage son.

Edits are sporadically clunky, camerawork efficient, lighting adequate. Sound is too frequently poorly recorded or inadequately mixed.

COURAGEOUS offers acceptable viewing for teens and adults. It's far too violent for preteens.

This Sony Pictures Home Entertainment dvd release includes multiple extra features. These consist of an audio commentary by the Kendrick Brothers, a

twenty-three minute documentary about making the film, twelve minutes of deleted scenes, seven minutes of outtakes and bloopers, a one-minute humorous compression of film content, a three minute featurette titled “The Heart of COURAGEOUS,” and a nine-minute “The Story of My Father” testimonial about redemption of an alcoholic parent.