

Review: October Baby Can't Be Ignored

October Baby is the movie few people want, but its message can't be pushed to the side.

The film, which opens today in nearly 400 theaters across the country, is about a teenage girl, Hannah, who discovers she survived an abortion. She goes on a trip to try and find the woman who tried to abort her and ask questions. The American conversation about abortion has become politicized. The film tries to bring the procedure back to its human elements, whether people want that or not.

October Baby resonates at its most unflinching moments and its pro-life producers do little to hide their agenda. Jasmine Guy (star of the 1980s and 1990s sitcom "A Different World") appears briefly, but memorably, as a former nurse haunted by the day Hannah came into the world. Her dialogue is the kind of language often used by former employees of abortion clinics. Guy's role is risky in many ways for a Hollywood actress. It's not politically correct, but it is poignant.

John Schneider, of Dukes of Hazzard and Smallville fame, plays Hannah's father. He, along with his wife, adopted the girl infant as she struggled for life in the hospital. The couple never told her of her roots. Schneider plays the role very similar to the way he did Jonathan Kent in Smallville: super protective and down home. Schneider brings some weight to the project, which is filled with young actors such as Rachel Hendrix, who plays Hannah.

Hannah's character is Job in many ways. She's constantly being kicked and you wonder how she's going to hold up under all the weight. Despite being beautiful, she's fragile and constantly ill. Hendrix plays Hannah appropriately and you feel the character's constant pain. The character's arc is fulfilling from a Christian perspective. She's not searching for her mother. She's looking to forgive and she gets that moment of encouragement from a Catholic priest, even though she's

baptist.

The scene plays out in a cathedral and you feel Hannah breathe for the first time in her life.

Hannah's rock in the film is her lifelong platonic friend, Jason (Jason Burkey). They grow closer in the film, but their intimacy is mental, not physical. He supports Hannah in her search for her mother and finds that his own girlfriend is toxic and selfish, unlike Hannah.

Beyond Guy, *October Baby's* strongest emotional moments come from Shari Rigby, who plays the abortive mother confronted with her past. I talked with Rigby, who actually had own real life abortion, and it was interesting to hear how that impacted her performance. Stay through the credits to hear her story.

The movie falters at moments when the film's writers realize they're dealing with heavy material and try to sprinkle in humor. There's nothing wrong with providing levity, but it attempts to shoehorn road trip montages which allude to more dangerous comedies like *Road Trip* and *The Hangover*. Of course, none of the humor in *October Baby* is ever close to being gross out or offensive, but the scenes felt like studio notes to lighten up the film and give it a cool factor. It feels like a Christian film version of those comedies and that's when it feels the most lame.

One can understand why the scenes are there, A movie about an abortion survivor, even with a female teenage protagonist, isn't a great sell. It doesn't help that the movie is opening against *The Hunger Games*, which will be on thousands of more screens nationwide. Teenagers will be flocking to that film.

October Baby will have a hard time getting beyond its pro-life audience this weekend. Those that go will be fulfilled and happy a story like this is being told. All it takes is a few people to stumble into the theater, though, to get the conversation going once again. If the movie is successful in making people reconsider their stance on abortion, it will have been a success for the movie's makers.

