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***Sixty Six* at the 2008 Wisconsin Film Festival**

Ellen Meany on Monday 04/07/2008 1:00 pm , (4) Recommendations

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It was a relatively small crowd that ambled into the Orpheum shortly after 1 p.m. Sunday, stepping in out of a sunny spring afternoon. The room was buzzing, the savory scent of brunch still wafting from the bustling lobby cafe. We were at the first movie here, which started at 11 a.m.. Then, some of us on the west side of the main floor were treated to the deep-sleep snoring of an intrepid filmgoer who couldn't quite make it through the sensitive denouement of *In Search of A Midnight Kiss*. The isolated laughter came at an inopportune time in that film. It was so very human.

Sixty Six offered another poignant slice of humanity. I love a good cry at the movies, especially when humor is integral to the theme. It's 1966. Our central character is Bernie Rubens, the second son of a London grocer who anticipates the day he becomes a man as the moment when, finally, he will be the center of attention. He plans to top the event thrown for his stereotypically clueless teen brother. While Bernie anticipates "the *Gone with the Wind* of Bar Mitvahs, the Cassius Clay of Bar Mitvahs, the Jesus Christ of Bar Mizvahs," events conspire against his dreams.

For one, his dad's fortunes take a modern, negative turn, while the true life prospects of the English national football team move in a positive direction. They won't actually make it to the championship, will they? Bernie must wish this away! Here's another Wisconsin Film Festival movie where a sport plays a central role.

Director Paul Weiland promises a "tru-ish" story and delivers something realistic, yet incredible, in that perfect, movie kind of way. Bernie's dilemma is intertwined with the real life voyage of the national team through the World Cup final. This is set for Wembley on July 30, which also happens to be Bernie's big day, though the scale of his party has diminished with his father's business and the inattentive friends and relatives who prefer British soccer to Bernie's Torah recital.

The sets, costume design and art direction are flawless, as is the soundtrack. Helena Bonham Carter is flawless as well, as Bernie's mom. Eddie Marsan is excellent as Bernie's earnest dad, who demonstrates a serious case of OCD. All for laughs and happy family endings -- "(Don't) Come On England!" -- brilliant.

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