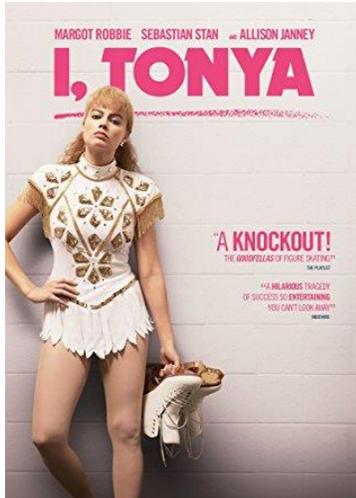


SPOTLIGHT ON FILM



For many of us in my generation, the Tonya Harding / Nancy Kerrigan drama of 1994 still provides a perfect example of the news media's transition to *sensationalist* news media. An American Olympic athlete accused of attacking her teammate a mere month before the games, the subsequent investigation, and the trial could have stood on their own merits as a compelling story, but the individuals involved were transformed into celebrities complete with paparazzi. Soon we'd have characters instead of real people, good guys (many dubbed Nancy Kerrigan "America's Sweetheart" as if we couldn't sympathize otherwise) and villains, while pundits and pseudo-experts spouted conspiracy theories on the 24-hour news cycle.

This, and similarly sensationalist stories of the same era (OJ Simpson, John Bobbitt, Joey Buttafuoco, Monica Lewinsky), were made even more surreal as non-news networks rushed out poor quality made-for-TV movies based (usually loosely) on these events. It was the recollection of such dubious films that probably made me so skeptical on the recent Hollywood adaptation *I, Tonya*— despite the critical acclaim and Oscar attention.

I need not have doubted it. *I, Tonya* is a phenomenal movie. The acting is superb (no surprise that Allison Janney took home the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress or that Margot Robbie was nominated for Best Actress), but what I found most impressive was the humanization of these people. It does not, as many feared, present Tonya Harding as a hero, or even worse as "the real victim," but the writers effectively emphasize the point that life is complex.

Who could have guessed that the story of Tonya Harding would be timely in 2018, the year of internet outrage, when people demand that we paint all human behaviour in black or white terms.

I, Tonya is available on DVD at the Yellowknife Public Library.

John Mutford, Library Manager

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