



Latest Reviews: August 7, 2008

Sixty Six

It's England, 1966, and 12-year old Bernie Rubens (Gregg Sulkin) is in danger of having The Worst. Bar mitzvah. Ever. His blind rabbi has convinced him that this single day will set the course for his entire future. So anything less than a sit-down dinner for 250 – or at least more guests than his aggro older brother Alvie (Ben Newton) had – means he'll forever be a last-picked-at-recess loser ... just like dear old dad (Eddie Marsan), a grocer who, despite being a putz, has a knockout wife (Helena Bonham Carter in some damned fine retro wear). Bernie wants the “*Gone With the Wind* of bar mitzvahs – the Jesus Christ of bar mitzvahs!” And so this nice, shy Jewish boy takes up black magic against the 1966 England World Cup team to ensure they don't dare make it to the finals nervily scheduled for his big day.

Like *Running with Scissors* or an exceptionally cruel episode of *The Wonder Years*, Paul Weiland's whimsical, eye-poppingly bright comedy is shot through with cringe-inducing misery. Watching poor Bernie's hopes (and his family's fortunes) get unrelentingly crushed after a supermarket opens down the block – naturally, the boy sees bankruptcy primarily as a threat to renting a fancy hotel for the affair – you might accuse writers Bridget O'Connor and Peter Straughan of sadism, except that it all happened, more or less, to director Weiland: Super-8 footage over the closing credits shows the pubescent Weiland sulking through his brother's class act bar mitzvah. But, as long as he keeps turning out films as delightfully keen, the kid'll be just fine. (Amy Nicholson) (Laemmle's Royal, Laemmle's Town Center 5)