

Win Win

Cert 15 USA 2011 105 mins

Crew

Director/screenplay Tom McCarthy
 Cinematography Oliver Bokelberg
 Film Editor Tom McArdle
 Production Design Mark White
 Music Lyle Workman

Cast

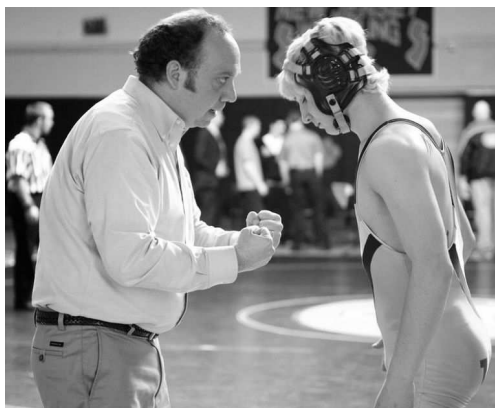
Paul Giamatti Mike
 Alex Shaffer Kyle
 Amy Ryan Jackie
 Bobby Cannavale Terry
 Jeffrey Tambor Stephen
 Burt Young Leo Poplar
 Melanie Lynskey Cindy

Synopsis

New Jersey, the present. Mike Flaherty is a small-town lawyer, struggling to keep his wife Jackie, their two young girls, and himself happy, while moonlighting as a wrestling coach for New Providence High School - which is going through a losing streak.

In an effort to solve his financial problems, Mike becomes guardian of an elderly client, Leo Poplar, who suffers from dementia., and gives a temporary home to Leo's teenage grandson Kyle, who has fled his drug-addicted mother.

Discovering that Kyle is a gifted wrestler, Mike enlists him in the school team, which quickly goes from strength to strength. But then Kyle's mother Cindy shows up - fresh out of rehab, flat broke, and threatening to derail everything.....



Film website:

www.foxsearchlight.com/winwin/



Reviews

...There's an element of feelgood routine here which wasn't present in McCarthy's earlier pictures, even if the overall theme of how our lives are enriched by unexpected connections taking us outside our comfort zone remains something of a constant.

In a way, though, what's just delightful about this wittily observed and touchingly truthful affair is the fact it offers consistently shrewd entertainment in the moment but ultimately holds to its purpose of saying something useful and genuine about real lives. A tricky balancing act indeed, though with loveable cohorts like Jeffrey Tambor and Bobby Cannavale on hand as Giamatti's buddy network, one always likely to be played out with smiles rather than furrowed brow.

Still, the film is disarmingly defiant in its insistence that our quotidian dilemmas are indeed the stuff of rich moral drama - or should that be comedy? When even indie cinema these days is heavily invested in the cute and the gimmicky, that's saying something, and Giamatti's insightful, pitch-perfect, truly relatable central turn seals the deal. Everybody wins.

Tom Huddleston, Time Out London, May 2011

Trying to please a crowd needn't be a shameful business. Tom McCarthy makes light comedies that notice the goodness and hospitality in unlikely people, yet stop short of sentimentalising them.

In *The Station Agent* (2003) a diminutive loner comes out of his shell to make friends. In *The Visitor* (2007) an uptight professor reaches out to a displaced couple in New York and accidentally discovers he's got rhythm. His latest, *Win Win*, is as tender-hearted as his first two, but with a more interesting moral hinge than either: a man does a dishonest thing, which inadvertently has good consequences....

....Much of the film is so amiable and charming that you keep wishing that McCarthy was just a bit tougher on himself as a writer. [...and he ...] could afford to be more expansive in his layering of scenes; he could trust more to silences, especially when he has a cast as good as this. An audience will love a film more when they are credited with the nous to interpret things rather than merely watch them.....But so what? McCarthy knows his characters and likes them, and somehow he ensures that we feel the same way. I'd say that's a win-win.

Anthony Quinn, The Independent, May 2011