Movie Review: The Case For Christ

Adam Hellyer 22 June 2017



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Many Christians would be familiar with the book 'The Case for Christ', which explores the true story of award-winning journalist, Lee Strobel, whose world is rocked when his wife comes to faith in Jesus. The movie of the same name weaves together three stories: Strobel's investigation into Christ, his rollercoaster marriage, and his story on a cop killer in Chicago. A confirmed atheist, Strobel applies his legal and journalistic skills to set about disproving the Christian faith. But what he discovers is not what he expected.

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Set in a faithfully rendered 1980s, complete with great cars and bad hair, The Case for Christ has a truly cinematic feel. As one atheist review said: it's that rare thing, a Christian movie that belongs in a cinema. An enjoyable score and soundtrack only add to the experience. Kansas' 1976 hit, Carry on Wayward Son, was a soundtrack highlight for me, and perhaps the inspiration

behind Strobel's inaccurate but suitably Southern-rocker movie moustache.



From left: Steve Walsh of Kansas, real 1981 Lee Strobel, movie Lee Strobel
A fictitious moustache is not a deal breaker. Small liberties are expected in a film "Based on a True Story". In The Case for Christ movie, it means some key events happen out of sequence or within a different timeframe. Some key characters, including the best friend Alfie, are amalgamations of several different real-life people. This has implications for key areas of the plot, it could be argued, in a movie where a key theme is 'The only way to truth is through facts', and the filmmakers have inadvertently created a work of fiction.

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However, the crux of the movie, Strobel's investigation into the resurrection, is still presented accurately. The arguments are well paced and well-acted, without the film ever feeling too preachy. Mike Vogel (The Help, Cloverfield) delivers a solid performance as Lee Strobel. Vogel is relatable as both the frequently drunk and overconfident reporter, and the cynic seeing his house of cards collapse. As Strobel's wife, Erika Christensen (Swimfan, Parenthood) does well in a role that could easily have been shallow or cliché. Her nuanced performance takes you into her wrestle with new-found faith and her struggle with a faltering marriage. Academy Award and Golden Globe winner Faye Dunaway, Tony Award winner L. Scott Caldwell, Academy nominee Robert Forster, and many other seasoned performers round off the cast, providing excellent support for the leading actors.

The film is a drama, so don't expect fast-paced action. There is some humour, but The Case for Christ sets about its business at a leisurely pace and may have been improved with fewer shots of Strobel staring into middle distance as the music swells. But, in chatting to those I went with, I soon realised that our few complaints were not those usually levelled at Christian movies. We all agreed – it holds its own as a film. No one was complaining about the acting or the dialogue. The niggles we had were like Tolkien fans viewing the Lord of the Rings trilogy: we were disappointed certain parts of the book had been left out, or we hadn't imagined a character looking the way they did in film.

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The Case for Christ is an entertaining and thought-provoking movie. I would certainly recommend it for Christians and non-Christians alike. While the movie tells one man's story, the evidence is presented for each to respond to themselves. If you have friends or work colleagues with Jesus questions, I would certainly recommend you take them along. An evening at the movies followed by a discussion over coffee… pray and trust God, who knows where it could lead?