

Wade Dominguez plays Emilio Ramirez, one of the inner-city students who receives guidance and encouragement from their English teacher (Pfeiffer).

## New faces help Pfeiffer bring true story to life in *Dangerous Minds*

### MOVIE REVIEW

**Dangerous Minds**  
Starring Michelle Pfeiffer  
and Renoly Santiago  
Directed by John N. Smith  
Rated R  
Playing at Hollywood 16  
★★★ (out of five)

By Rachel Barry  
THE BATTALION

In *Dangerous Minds*, Michelle Pfeiffer's new movie about helping inner-city kids succeed, the heart of the movie is the students. Disruptive and out of control, they have no motivation to learn.

Eventually their motivation comes from their teacher, LouAnne Johnson (Pfeiffer) — but not without a little pushing, a little crying and a lot of bribing.

*Dangerous Minds* is based on Johnson's true story of an ex-Marine turned English instructor whose first teaching experience leaves her being booed and yelled out of the classroom.

Johnson, donning a leather jacket and cowboy boots, becomes determined to take control of the class any way she can. Through karate, candy bars and a trip to

an amusement park, she slowly holds the students' attention and they begin to learn.

Most of the movie consists of Johnson's battles with the students and school board. She is torn between the only methods that will get student's attention and the curriculum set by the school board.

Struggling to keep the students in class, Johnson goes to their homes and sometimes invites them into hers. In any other situation, her good deeds would seem overdone and extreme. In this case, however, they are justified by her determination to keep the students in class and to eventually see them graduate.

The classroom in *Dangerous Minds* is filled with faces of unknown actors. They aren't untouchable waifs or buff high school boys — they are the real thing, and their believability adds depth to the movie.

Renoly Santiago, a newcomer to the screen, plays Raul, one of Johnson's favorite students. Through the course of the semester, Raul changes from a fighting street kid to a poetry-reading student. Santiago's performance is one of the best in *Dangerous Minds*. He combines the street smarts of his facade with the innocence of his charac-

ter perfectly and delivers a star performance.

One weakness of *Dangerous Minds* is its script. The transitions are unclear and choppy, making it hard to follow. Relationships between characters aren't developed well. When tragedy strikes, the emotion that should be evoked doesn't because the connection with the characters wasn't there in the first place. There wasn't enough time to properly develop the story and to do it justice.

The true story behind *Dangerous Minds* is the driving force of the movie. Actors and scripts aside, what keeps *Dangerous Minds* from slipping into the mass of street-kids-fighting-back movies is that it is real. Putting famous faces and a flashy soundtrack to this real life drama does nothing but sugar coat the reality of kids who are slipping through the fingers of the schools and a system that no longer cares.



Pfeiffer

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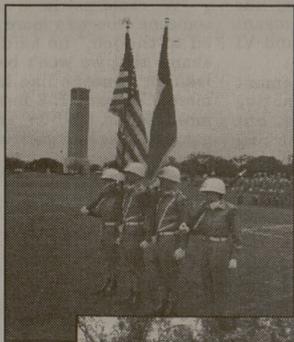
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