

E-Haven Newsletter March 2010

a nonprofit corporation

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The Greatest

Starring Pierce Brosnan, Susan Sarandon,
Carey Mulligan
Written & Directed By Shana Feste



Opening In California & New York April 2

Pico Landmark Theater, CA
Santa Monica Laemmle, CA
Hollywood Arclight, CA
Sherman Oaks Arclight, CA
Pasadena Playhouse 7, CA
Irvine Westpark 8, CA
New York Paris Theater, NY
New York Village East, NY

Opening Nationwide April 9

Give Yourself A Great Gift.
SEE THIS MOVIE!

Question: Do you find yourself avoiding any movie that includes the death of a child? WELL, so did we, but not anymore—not after seeing *The Greatest!*
This movie will fill you with love, support, and hope.

Dear Friends,

Never before has anyone written, directed, and produced a movie about the journey parents and siblings take after the death of a child that is as beautiful, accurate, meaningful, special, and full of hope as *The Greatest*. In fact, Shana Feste lost a brother and grew up in a family where talking about it was absolutely taboo. Writing *The Greatest* is her gift to parents, siblings, and anyone who simply loves and appreciates great writing, directing, and a movie experience that will deeply impact your life. Just read all of the quotes on the next page from parents, including the well-known movie critic and columnist, Rex Reed. And after you see *The Greatest*, send us your quotes, and we will send them to Shana, the producers, and the actors who will appreciate all that you share.

On March 22, over 100 *griefHaven* families, friends, and specialists gathered in a private screening room in Beverly Hills, California for a free *griefHaven* event that included a private screening of the movie *The Greatest* followed by a Q&A with Shana Feste, director and writer, Beau St. Clair, producer, and Wayne Neiman, *griefHaven* advisory board member and executive at Warner Bros. And the weekend prior to the *griefHaven* private screening, Susan Whitmore, our founder and president, met with Shana Feste and her husband, Brian Kavanaugh Jones, for a no-holds-barred interview regarding every-



Shana Feste on the Set of *The Greatest*

thing that went into the writing, directing, and filming of *The Greatest*. The results of both Susan's private interview with Shana and *griefHaven's* Q&A after the screening will be shared with you in the April 2010 *E-Haven*, so be watching for it next month.

So you may decide whether or not you will see *The Greatest*, we decided to simply share direct quotes from other parents, siblings, family members, and specialists who have seen it. And if you have any questions, please call us.

Quotes About The Greatest

"I didn't want to see the movie because it was a school night and I had a lot of homework. Plus, I thought 'why would I want to see a movie that is my life?' Now I am so glad that I did.

My brother died two years ago in a car accident, and I had also heard there was a car accident in the movie which I was afraid to see. All I can say is that I am so glad I did see this movie. Everything in it was accurate, and I kept hoping that anyone whose brother or sister has died would see the movie because it will give them so much hope. I also kept hoping my parents and grandparents who were there with us would see what it's like for me, because the brother in the movie had it exactly right. Thanks to griefHaven for putting this event on, and I do recommend it to siblings (of the right age) and their friends and relatives." Sibling

"My friends: Everyone I brought with me last night was very impressed with *griefHaven* and sooooo glad they came. They felt the evening was worthy and the movie was great. I was called the next day by each one who



Pierce Brosnan and Susan Sarandon — The Brewer Family

thanked me for inviting them." Parent

"This is how I tell my story about the *griefHaven* event and the movie, *The Greatest*. I felt comfortable, safe and surrounded by warmth and love. The theater was beautiful. I didn't realize how much it meant to me that some of my close friends came to support me...it meant the world to me. They felt that the evening had great impact and were so glad they came. The evening was 'right,' although the circumstances that brought us all there were wrong. I'm glad I came. I'm glad my [surviving] son was with me.

The movie was great! The acting was brilliant...each and every actor gave an honest performance and reached emotional depths beyond expectations. Susan Sarandon was 'raw' and kept a steady pace of painful anxiety throughout the entire movie. Pierce Brosnan demonstrated a gritty despair of emotionality that penetrated every turn the story took. Johnny Simmons was simply and brilliantly believable as their grieving son. And Carrie Mulligan...wow! A performance of certainty and truth. Every expression she portrayed stepped gently into the character letting the audience know that Rose's strength and determination was unwavering.

Shana Feste wrote and directed a story that needs to be

told...a story that needs to be seen...and a story that is about real-life drama. I commend her sensitivity and intelligence, as the movie reflected these qualities. Her senses were alert, as the film took you on a journey of pure realism and thought. *The Greatest* is a great movie!" Parent

"Thank you for hosting the screening of 'The Greatest.' I was so glad to be able to see the film, meet you, the writer/director and one of the producers. It was a very meaningful evening and I have already begun to share the importance of this film with my colleagues." Therapist

"I just wanted to write to tell you how much I enjoyed (hardly the right word) last evening. It was a real privilege and pleasure to see the film and to hear about Shana's journey in making it. She was completely inspired and I look forward to watching her career progress. The acting was so beautiful, and this was truly a heartfelt labor of love by all concerned." Family friend.

REX REED, Movie Critic & Columnist

"Grief comes cloaked in as many forms as the tragedies that cause it. Almost all of them are on view in *The Greatest*, a somber, sensitively acted, intelligently penned, and sincerely directed film about the untimely death of a much-admired young man, the profound impact it has on his family, and the various ways the people who love him learn to express their mourning. The usual grumpy cynics will undoubtedly call it sentimental and manipulative. Ignore them. *The Greatest* is cut from the same bolt of emotional genre fabric as the 1980 classic, *Ordinary People*--a rare bird among films because it is strong and filled with extraordinary human values that remain foreign to most hermetically sealed studio packages. The title refers to the boy who departs too soon, not to the movie itself, which may also depart too soon depending on box-office grosses, but not because it's undeserving.

A debut effort carefully written and directed by Shana Feste, [*The Greatest*] offers a nuanced diagnosis of people in both their goodness and imperfection, with a touching screenplay that focuses on the actual things people do and say in survival mode. This is not the kind of personal movie Hollywood knows how to make very often, and God knows it is not the kind of movie Hollywood *ever* knows how to sell. (Already they're asking, "Does it have legs?") It's not *Avatar*, but in an equitable movie world, there should be something for everyone.

One caveat: If it's true, as they say, that when one door closes, another door opens, I feel that perhaps in *The Greatest* too many doors open too fast in time to meet the deadline for a happy ending, but this is just a small hangnail compared to the manicured strengths of a film of maturity and courage that kept me consistently engaged. Quite an accomplishment, really, for a new filmmaker on her first date with a camera."

"I have spent the last eight years since the death of my child avoiding watching any movie that includes someone's child dying. THAT pattern was broken when I saw *The Greatest* at the private *griefHaven* screening, and boy oh boy am I glad that I did. This film, *The Greatest*, has truly given me such validation and hope that we parents will perhaps receive more understanding and support from those who have seen this movie, because this writer/director finally got it right! FINALLY someone got it right. Every second in this movie paints a picture of what a day in the life is like for a family

who is picking up the pieces and living life after a child and sibling dies. But it's not just some gut-wrenchingly sad movie. Not at all. It's beautifully written, acted, and full of meaning and hope. There are moments of laughter and genuine caring and loving. The surprise story (I don't want to spoil it for anyone) is based on a true story that really happened to someone, and Shana said she decided to include it. Nothing is far out in this movie. It's as if Shana Feste said to us, 'Come with me, and I will give you a special gift of hope that will help you and those you love for the rest of your lives.' You, as the audience, are drawn in and find yourselves saying, 'Yes, that is exactly how it is! Yes! That is what it's like.' You'll find yourselves wanting everyone to see this movie so they, too, will get it. And no one will be upset with you because you took them to see this movie. In fact, they will thank you—yes they will. My hope is that everyone who has lost a child, lost a brother or sister, been impacted by the death of someone's child (family member or friend) or who works in the various fields where children die will see this movie. Tell everyone you know to go and see it! Trust me on this one." Father

"Wow!!! What a powerful film, and what an amazing woman/director.....the cast....everything! Thank you so much for including me. I would never have gone to see this film on my own.....it just felt so safe to in *griefHaven*. I am so glad I saw this movie." Family friend.



Shana Feste & Beau St. Claire
During *griefHaven* Q&A

"After my son's passing, I have watched a lot of movies about loss and death, but none of them came close to what I experienced last night.

The movie was great. It was just real. I felt a meaningful connection with Shana and Rabbi Steven Reuben and the actors of the *Greatest* that I had not experienced before. For the first time, I felt connected with people who were not part of a grieving group, but felt our pain. I was crying the whole time. The art of communication, appreciation and forgiveness were nicely presented in this great movie. Shana and Steven's show of love and affection was beyond my expectation. Last night, we were surrounded by God's love. I think the Universe wants us to know we are all connected and we are loved. I hope everyone else felt the connection. I read an article wherein the author wished we could feel that connection in the very daily and mundane moments of our lives. Love, which is about connectedness, has been pushing to the surface, slowly transforming our capacity to see that the love we so dearly desire is, indeed, available.

Thank you again for sharing this great event with us." Parent

"The screening was awesome and beyond all expectations...Oscar stuff...best performances ever for Pierce and Susan and Carey Mulligan who is an amazingly vulnerable actress of such range for someone so young. Glad I told my friend about it and that they came . . . we four had dinner first, so it made for a very good evening out. Then my friends and their daughter came, so they were lucky to have made it too.

Shana is directing and writing because she possesses a true gift, that is obvious to all of us. There is no other way to explain such innate talent and insight into a subject like this. Having the Q&A was terrific and how brave of them (Shana and Beau) to appear before all of us, truly bereaved parents, and some sibs! I think once again you did a wonderful service for those of us who are so in need of events like this in support of our losses. I am sure I am not alone in giving you a big hug and a heartfelt thanks for producing this event."

"We send you congratulations on the amazing event you pulled together. The movie was beyond worlds; the young writer/director is a genius, I think. I've never seen a film quite like that. It was nice meeting a few more MLMs (moms like me) and speaking with them. The grief continues. Take care & enjoy your success!!!" Both Parents

"Wow! What a wonderful and powerful movie—a must see for sure. I was so impressed with the writer's depth and understanding of what happens when a family experiences grief from the loss of their child. There were so many nuances she was able to bring to life on the screen. I am so glad that Shana was adamant about leaving certain scenes in for the final cut of the film. What a great eye and heart she has for filmmaking. How Susan Sarandon wakes up and then begins to cry...now that was right on the money for sure. Susan's obsession to know what happened to her son . . . The house being messy, and the husband's process versus the wife's process . . . There were so many little things that kept the continuity true in this film. I am looking forward to more of this writer's work and know that she has a great career ahead of her. Thank you for inviting me to this event and hope to attend any of *griefHaven's* events that might be open to those of us who work with and who are family members or friends to those who are finding their way through this and on to the Hope of a greater Peace of Heart. Family relative
"Gorgeously acted. Magnificent, heartfelt, and romantic."
Ray Pride, *Movie City News*

We hope we have given you enough information to encourage you to see *The Greatest*. We want to support Shana Feste, the producers, and this important movie with its beautiful and meaningful message. And remember: send us your quotes, and we will send them to Shana, the producers, and the actors.

To pre-purchase tickets in California:

Arclight Hollywood: <https://www.arclightcinemas.com/ArcLight/faces/MovieDetails.jsp?movieName=THE+GREATEST&movieType=ComingSoon&pageInfo=ComingSoon¤tCinemaId=1001>

Landmark: <https://tickets.landmarktheatres.com/Landmark.aspx?TheatreID=267>