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## Dailies: King of California Bethel Swift

*Relevant flames: 1 out of 5*

Every once in a while, a film comes along that you really want to like.

You bus an hour out to see it, pay for the ticket and settle in with popcorn and a prejudice-free approach. But then you realize the jokes aren't making you (or anyone else in the theater) laugh, the emotional high points are laughable and the only response to action scenes are theater-wide yawns. *King of California*, a limited release starring Michael Douglas and Evan Rachel Wood, is just one of those films.

Douglas and Wood are both wonderful actors and although the film is not memorable, their performances are sincere. Douglas plays Charlie, a man who starts life as a smart, law-abiding citizen, but inexplicably hits a low point in his life and loses his mind. He spends two years in a mental facility, dreaming and planning his search for lost treasure. Meanwhile daughter Miranda (Wood), grows into a very responsible and very lonely teenager who pays all the bills, washes all the dishes and for some reason, goes along with all her father's schemes once he is released.

Much of the film takes place in Miranda's workplaces: first McDonald's, then Costco. The rest, with the exception of a few flashbacks that do little to develop the plot, occur outdoors in a variety of mildly humorous trespassing scenes. Douglas's character plays up many common misconceptions about the mentally ill, which is forgivable in a comedy—although this film barely registers as such.

While Miranda sees her father as a bipolar and crazy dreamer, a more accurate description is simply self-centered. Charlie waxes sentimental to his daughter about how dishes should be hand washed, the old-fashioned way, but never lifts a finger to do any. His conniving plans land a close friend in jail and cost his daughter nearly everything.

This film has strong themes—father/daughter relationships, self reflection and treasure hunting—that have carried other films to fame and considerable fortune. Unfortunately, *King of California* doesn't proclaim anything new and provides only the opportunity to see Michael Douglas digging holes on a turf grass farm, swimming through sewage and surveying more land than even a surveyor does in his/her entire lifetime.

Somewhere in the middle of the film, Miranda starts to realize (long after I did) that she shouldn't have encouraged her father in this escapade.

The most amazing feat in the entire film is that Charlie and Miranda get past the Costco lady without a membership card. I am firmly convinced that it can't be done.

