

# 'If I Had Legs I'd Kick You' Review: Motherhood

## Unravelled

Starring Rose Byrne in a career-best performance, *If I Had Legs I'd Kick You* is an unrelenting film about the agony of womanhood.



*If I Had Legs I'd Kick You* follows Linda (Byrne), a mother and therapist with a sick child, as her house becomes damaged due to a mysterious hole that has appeared in her bedroom ceiling. From there, Linda and her daughter must live out of a motel, but as time passes, things spiral out of control as the Doctor insists that Linda must get her daughter to her weight goal in response to her illness.

The film explores themes of motherhood, trauma, the emotional isolation of women and self-blame. The storyline is strung together by a seemingly unending sequence of unfortunate events. Car accidents and rabid hamsters, to name a couple, it feels as if everything is going wrong for Linda, on top of the fact that her daughter is unwell. Thus, the film exists as a genre blend - a dramedy and psychological thriller embedded with dark humour.

Starting with what went well, everyone gives strong performances throughout the film. With a star-studded cast — Rose Byrne, A\$AP Rocky (James), and Conan O'Brien (therapist) there was a risk that audiences would be distracted by these celebrity names. But Bronstein's emphasis on performance as a pivotal storytelling device reveals that she is an actor's director and a good one at that. No one is lacking in this department. That being said, Rocky's character feels like an unnecessary presence at times within the overall story. There were many moments in the film where his character wasn't needed for the overall impact of the feature, despite A\$AP Rocky being a competent performer who also featured in Spike Lee's *Highest to Lowest*, to great acclaim.

Moving on, Bronstein crafts a multi-faceted and deeply rich emotional landscape for the character Linda. She is both a physically and emotionally exhausted mother, always on the brink of snapping — or just snapping. Her therapist is cold, distant, and exacting, treating her like a petulant child. Conan O'Brien holds his weight against Byrne, who is a seasoned actress and is superb throughout.

Another compelling aspect of the film was the use of costume, hair and make-up. As the film progresses and Linda's grip on control slips into disarray, so does her wardrobe. At the start,

she is well kept, with high heels, stockings and dresses, but as the film continues, her costumes become more ill-fitting, outdated and sloppy. At one point, she goes to work in an old hoodie. This really aided the narrative, creating a much richer film. Even smaller details like tattoos helped to bring the character, echoing that she was someone before parenthood and becoming a career professional. Perhaps someone freer? But that's up to audiences to decide.

The cinematography is well done, although not much stood out in that department other than the constant use of close-ups on Linda's face. It felt invasive and, at times, violating, but that is intentional. The sound design is guttural and visceral, and in a climactic scene towards the end, it may leave you squeamish.

One aspect that weakened the film is that it attempts to pack in too many abstract metaphors and symbols. As one metaphor is explored, it is firmly closed, leaving viewers to grasp at straws. If some metaphors were better explored through visual imagery, that would have left a greater impact on the overall story. For example, in the opening scene, Linda's daughter describes her as stretchy; it would have been much more fascinating to have that explored visually. Her daughter could play with putty, slime or plasticine to show how women are forced to be amicable and shapeshift into whatever people want them to be.

What was most disappointing was that there was no moment where Linda had a positive experience with another woman. A moment where her suffering is understood. She exists in isolation, and there is no reprieve for her whatsoever in all of it. Why not include a moment where another woman shares mutual understanding of what she's going through?

The film finds its place nicely situated in a canon of feminist filmmaking directed at interrogating motherhood in an unglamorous way. Films like *Die, My Love* (2025) and *Night Bitch* (2024) also investigate womanhood through the lens of becoming a mother in a way that is primal and gritty. One can't ignore the political undertones as the film comments on how women are expected to carry all burdens in isolation.

### **The Verdict**

*If I Had Legs I'd Kick You* is a riveting watch throughout, and Rose Byrne's performance will stay with you long after you've finished the film. It's not an easy watch by any means, but it exists as a chaotic rollercoaster from beginning to end.

*Words by Ayomide Asani*

*If I Had Legs I'd Kick You*, released in UK cinemas on 20th February.

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