Based on a true story, Soul Surfer is about the life of teenager Bethany Hamilton (AnnaSophia Robb), who loses her arm in a shark attack and courageously overcomes all odds to become a champion again, through her sheer determination and unwavering faith.

Raised by surfer parents (Dennis Quaid and Helen Hunt). Bethany leads the idyllic, sun-drenched, surfer girl’s life on the Kauai Coast, competing in national competitions with her best friend Alana (Lorraine Nicholson), when everything changes in a heartbeat. On Halloween morning, Bethany is on a typical ocean outing when a 14-foot tiger shark appears out of nowhere and attacks her.

As Bethany fights to recover and grapples with the physical and emotional scars, she is forced to confront a myriad of questions: Why did this happen? Why did she have to lose everything? Will she ever feel the joy and power of riding the waves again? And if she can’t be a surfer, then who is she?
The devastating 2004 tsunami in the Pacific Ocean unexpectedly gives Bethany a new perspective. Traveling to Phuket, Thailand with her youth-group leader Sarah Hill (Carrie Underwood), she learns to look beyond herself and discovers she can make a difference in the lives of others. Filled with a new sense of hope and direction, she returns home with a renewed resolve to conquer her own limitations and set an encouraging example for people facing adversity.

At the National Championships, Bethany bravely faces off with her fiercest rival, Malina Birch (Sonya Balmores), and takes her astonishing one-armed surfing technique to the limit. But as the horn blows, and the suspenseful competition kicks off, Bethany is no longer thinking about the challenges of her body. Now, her surfing, her biggest dreams and her life have become about pushing her own physical limits to touch the souls of others.

Soul Surfer is infused with Christian values, as audiences witness Bethany’s faith and perseverance to continue to surf despite her physical limitations. It comes across as “safe” and almost cliche, and you wish you could see more of the real-life struggles Bethany Hamilton would have faced.

Bethany’s mean rival Malina and her dashing love interest are also fictitious additions to the true story to tick off the boxes of your typical Hollywood movie.
That said, the performances put up by the all-star cast are nothing short of excellent. Robb plays Bethany well, portraying her faith and courage without descending to melodrama. Dennis Quaid and Oscar winner Helen Hunt are convincing as Bethany’s stubborn, supportive dad and strict, loving mother, and country singer Carrie Underwood has also done well in her debut performance as an actress.

But what audiences would appreciate most of all, is getting to meet the real Bethany Hamilton and hear her story as the movie’s closing credit rolls.

Subtlety may be lacking in Soul Surfer, but it doesn’t take away the fact that the story is an inspiring and powerful one.

Soul Surfer opens in cinemas May 26.

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City of Melbourne Comic Club  August 17, 2011 , 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

ASEAN Student Games Melbourne 2011 October 1, 2011 , 12:00 am to 5:00 pm

Easy Breezy Acoustic Night October 5, 2011 , 8:30 pm to 10:30 pm

Melbourne Muslim Festival 2011 October 16, 2011 , 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Public lecture by Professor Chomsky  November 4, 2011 , 7:30 pm to 10:30 pm

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