

Review: *Operation Varsity Blues*

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If I know one thing to be true, it's that Netflix audiences love true crime stories. Some of the streaming services' biggest hits are documentary-style true crime stories like *Making a Murderer*, *Tiger King*, and *Evil Genius*. It has become such a fan favorite that the category titled Documentaries feels mostly filled up with true crime stories. In 2019 when the American college admissions bribery scandal news broke, I knew that it was only a matter of time before Netflix made a documentary about the felony conspiracy. So as soon as I saw *Operation Varsity Blues* this past month it came as no surprise.

The hour 40-minute one-part documentary does a fantastic job retelling the story of William Singer and the American college admissions scandal. Singer was the mastermind behind getting wealthy families into any college of their choosing using what he called the "side door" between 2011 to 2019. The side door involved bribery, falsified SAT and ACT test scores, and creating fictional athletic accomplishments to gain scholarships.

My favorite aspect of the documentary is that they switch between actors reenacting the parents, kids, Singer, and others involved in the scandal. Then the perspective will switch to top American college tutors, students who felt impacted by the

scandal, and even the Stanford sailing coach, John Vandemoer, who was charged with accepting bribes. This gave multiple sides to the story and also a nice visual representation of how Singer did it. I thought Matthew Modine did a fantastic job playing the lead role of Singer. When the documentary switches to the actors it feels very realistic, especially because the phone calls are based on the transcripts from the FBI wiretaps.

Another aspect that *Operation Varsity Blues* hits on is that it tries to point out the problems with the modern-day higher educational system.

The major issue *Operation Varsity Blues* mentions is that college is becoming too much of a business with opportunities afforded to the wealthy but not available to anyone else.

They also mentioned the issues on how standardized testing holds too much weight in college acceptance today.

They say that this is not a fair measurement since it tends to favor rich and educated families. Being a current college student, it's nice to see a documentary pointing out the issues that have been getting increasingly worse. It also doesn't feel like it takes anything away from the story, but in fact, I think it's important to mention when retelling the *Varsity Blues* scandal.

I really enjoyed this documentary and like how it was one long episode instead of the common multiple-episode style of Netflix.

