‘Work It’ playfully explores ambition through music and dance

CHENNAI: Laura Terruso’s “Work It” — one of Netflix’s better releases in the recent months of the pandemic — centers on a young woman’s dream to get into the college that her late father attended. The charming film has an easy pace and, despite its predictable nature, makes for a compelling watch, largely owing to the dance sequences, which form the core of the plot.

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Produced by Alicia Keys and performed by a cast of actors in their twenties posing as high schoolers, “Work It” is essentially the story of Quinn (singer and Disney star Sabrina Carpenter), a student who receives excellent grades at school, is focused and

has few interests outside her campus. She does have a dream, however, and a desperate one at that — to get into Duke University. Quinn is determined to receive admission into Duke after she graduates from high school.

“Work It” centers on a young woman’s dream to get into the college that her late father attended. Supplied

It seems her grades alone are not enough, however, and in an interview with the head of Duke, a slight misunderstanding occurs. Quinn is mistaken for a dancer, and it appears her admission hinges on her being one. She is not even part of her school’s award-winning dance team. So, she enlists the help of her best friend, Jas (YouTuber-turned-actor Liza Koshy), who is a superb dancer. As the plot progresses, Quinn falls in love with Jake (singer and “Hamilton” star, Jordan Fisher), also an accomplished artist, who doubles as her coach.

Quinn assembles a team of girls and boys — who can barely shake a leg but who are eager to be part of her efforts — to join a dance competition. The group has difficulty finding a place to practice but eventually find a spot at a nursing home, where residents turn in by seven in the evening. There is a hilarious scene in which Quinn and the dance group begin a practice session only to elicit the interest of one of the residents, who appears to have been disturbed by the noise but who, much to the surprise and amusement of the group, sportingly joins in!

“Work It” is playful, and the dance sessions are a lot of fun to watch, despite Quinn’s desperation to get it right. The 93-minute run time has never a dull moment, not even when Quinn is deep in the dumps, having been rejected by Duke and finding it a struggle to get her body to sway to the beat.