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'Knocked Up' makes fun of every girl's worst nightmare

Deborah Nicol
The Desert Post Weekly
May 31, 2007

It's any girl's worst nightmare. Getting the big promotion, celebrating with a night on the town, having a few too many and waking up in the bed of the biggest loser.

And when director Judd Apatow puts his spin on the situation, it's sure to be alternately crude and sensitive but always brash.

Without a doubt, the man knows how to dish the funny and is able to gather the best actors for stirring up jokes.

With a smorgasbord of fringe players from "Freaks and Geeks," "The Office" and "Saturday Night Live," it is questionable how much was put to the page and how much of the loose dialogue was improvised, with or without herbal assistance.

Major players from "The 40 Year Old Virgin" return to a good gig, as seen with Paul Rudd, Apatow's better half Leslie Mann and Apatow golden boy Seth Rogen. Mann tones down her previous insanity to mere OCD levels while inciting laughter as mother Debbie who still appreciates the occasional lewd comment from a clubgoer.

Debbie's sister is the titular knocked up woman in question, portrayed by Katherine Heigl who plays straight woman to everyone. While others crack jokes at a friend's expense, Heigl pulls out the puppy dog eyes and quivering lips.

Apatow never forgets to provide an anchor to reality, and drama is infused into what may otherwise get out of hand as a comedy alone.

Rogen invites sympathy to his character in such a way that does not seem out of turn for his impregnating king of slackers. His pangs of guilt and inner struggle seek a natural evolution without being too sudsy.

Though his relationship with Heigl is sweet and genuine, it is his chemistry with Rudd that is most appealing. Teasing at their "You know how I know you're gay?" exchange from "The 40 Year Old Virgin," the two instantly create sparks whenever left alone. And when not alone, it's obvious that they'd like to be.

Considering the particularly uncomfortable situation of learning to love (or at least tolerate) someone during a 9-month-long second date, Apatow tackles all angles. From the perspective of both friends under the influence and couples on rocky ground, Apatow treads common waters for this storyline but tweaks the comedic dialogue to levels that only happen late at night with old friends.

Worthy of a consistent chortle, the film fails to spike to peaks of absurdity, but each character delivers a moment of true inanity. As the battle of the sexes draws lines of acceptable behavior, each side basks in their worst neuroses.

Yet Apatow manages to avoid teetering on the edge between overkill and oversimplify.

Straddling a sweet coming of (adult) age comedy over gross out comedies of yore, Apatow has tapped into a niche that suits his intelligence and odd sense of humor.

He ultimately creates a movie as varied as his characters and best viewed with your most obnoxious crowd of friends.



Universal Pictures

'KNOCKED UP'
★★★

Rated: R for sexual content, drug use and language.
Time: Two hours, 9 minutes
Genre: Comedy
Language: English
Starring: Seth Rogen, Katherine Heigl, Paul Rudd, Leslie Mann
Director: Judd Apatow
Showing: Opens Friday.

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