

***Rating: «««* out of 4**

Running Time: 97 min.

Occasionally, a critic just ends up giving a movie a pass simply based on how many times it brings a smile to their face. The new comedy *Snatched* doesn’t offer a new or unique take on the comedy genre and is by no means a classic. What it does possess is an excellent and very funny cast who manage (sometimes on charm alone) to steal just enough laughs to earn it a modest recommendation.

In many respects, this flick feels like it came off a comedy movie assembly line. The story is simple and the act breaks as well as plot points are obvious. Its central theme and mother-daughter relationship isn’t anything you haven’t seen a hundred times. Mom is smart but too conservative and closed-off for her own good, while her adult child is selfish and needs to take more responsibility in her life. Along the way, they must deal with their personal issues and remind themselves of how much they care for one another.

Yes, the story details as mentioned are about as generic as it gets. Emily (Amy Schumer) gets fired from her job and is dumped by her boyfriend (Randall Park) only days before setting out on a resort vacation in Ecuador. Desperate for company, she convinces her divorced mother Linda (Goldie Hawn) to join her. Of course, things don’t go as planned. Lost, alone and on the run, they find themselves chased by heavies and traversing through the jungle in the hopes of finding safety at an American embassy.

The tale itself is episodic with the ladies encountering plenty of eccentrics along the way. In

some respects the concept is culturally insensitive (Ecuador and Columbia are presented as life-threatening places), but it’s played in such a broad manner that one can’t take that aspect seriously. Thankfully, the interplay between the two leads is amusing, with Hawn more than game to sell some of the film’s cruder gags. And each and every person they encounter during their exploits is appropriately goofy, leading to many of the film’s most memorable moments. This includes Barb (Joan Cusack) and Ruth (Wanda Sykes), two oddballs at the resort who are highly suspicious of everyone’s motives and claim to be experts at covert military maneuvers.

Roger (Christopher Meloni) also makes an impression as a brawny “adventurer” who confidently claims that he can lead the pair out of the jungle to their destination. As the protagonists learn more about the mysterious figure, their fear for their own safety is only exacerbated. Emily’s brother Jeffrey (Ike Barinholtz) may be the highlight of the supporting cast thanks to his character’s bizarre, yet affectionate way of referring to his mother. He uses the term so frequently that it becomes funnier and funnier as the film progresses. It’s almost as if the performer simply wills the joke into working.

One also can’t help but note and be entertained by the fact that the majority of men in the film are completely useless and of no help to the heroines. *Snatched* is uneven and takes a while to get going, but there are a few big laughs to be enjoyed along the way. And unlike many comedies of the past few years, it’s quickly paced and doesn’t overextend itself with lengthy improvisations and an untenable running time. If you’re able to forgive some missteps and a few flat gags, you’ll likely get a chuckle or two out of it.

By Glenn Kay
For the Sun