

Love, Simon is a sweet, predictable coming of age story

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««« out of ««««

Running Time: 109 minutes

This reviewer is now at an age where he's seen more teen coming-of-age movies than he can possibly remember. *Love, Simon* is yet another entry in the genre that, story-wise, is formatted exactly like others of its ilk. The exception in this case is the sexual orientation of the lead character. Admittedly, it isn't the funniest teen comedy that has ever been produced, but the cast is charming and the subject matter well-handled with earnestness and sensitivity. As a result, the final product is exceedingly likable.

Simon (Nick Robinson) is a high school student in a nice suburban neighborhood. However, the young adult is tormented about coming out and how that might change his relationship with friends Leah (Katherine Langford), Abby (Alexandra Shipp) and Nick (Jorge Lendeborg Jr.), as well as with his parents (Jennifer Garner and Josh Duhamel). When someone in his area posts an online message about grappling with a similar issue, Simon invents a profile and the two begin anonymously communicating their feelings and concerns. Unfortunately, he forgets to log out of his account one day, revealing his secret to awkward classmate Martin (Logan Miller). As Simon wonders who his online friend might be, Martin uses blackmail to make the protagonist set him up with Abby.

The movie gets most of its comic mileage from Simon attempting to figure out the identity of the mysterious pen-pal. Of course, it turns out to be much more difficult than anticipated based on the varied interests and actions of those around him. This results in a few awkwardly amusing

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conversations and helps establish that personal tastes are not a telling sign of one's sexual orientation. Dream sequences are also used, with a couple of them earning some laughs (the funniest being one in which Simon imagines what life in his college dorm room might be like as a gay man).

Of course, there's plenty of interpersonal drama Simon is forced into manipulating relationships, leading to other embarrassing interactions between the leads. Thankfully, the movie doesn't revel in or make too much fun of some of the wince-inducing behavior displayed by Martin. And when the lead begins to reveal his secret to others, the tone seems right, handling the situations with sympathy, warmth and humor. Many of the questions and inner-thoughts of the characters aren't issues that would have immediately leapt to mind, so the film deserves credit for its thoughtful treatment of the subject matter. It also helps that the young cast is so amiable, helping the film float through slower, more routine passages.

The story itself is, admittedly, fairly predictable. It certainly follows a glossy Hollywood formula and not all of the jokes always result in big laughs. The movie also wants to tie up all of its story threads up a little too cleanly, with every relationship and conflict resolved by the close in a positive and upbeat manner. Truthfully, the film could have added even more authenticity had it left some unresolved drama and conflict for its protagonist.

However, there's a lot of charm on display and the end results are enjoyable. *Love, Simon* certainly has more on its mind than the typical teen flick and addresses its themes in a sweet and compassionate manner. Based on the reaction of youngsters around me at the preview screening, it's going to be very successful with its target audience and provide them with plenty to think about as they leave the theater.

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