

## Crazy Rich Asians features likeable cast in a generic story

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
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Rating: <<< out of 4 <<<<<

Running Time: 120 minutes

This week sees the wide release of the romantic-comedy *Crazy Rich Asians*, based on a bestselling book. The movie is told from a somewhat different perspective than your typical Hollywood flick and shows off some incredible locations in and around Singapore. This is all welcome, adding more unique elements to the genre. One only wishes that the story itself wasn't so bland and generic.

Rachel Chu (Constance Wu) is an economics professor in New York City whose expertise appears to be game theory. Her relationship with successful but modest Nick Young (Henry Golding) is becoming serious. So much so that when Nick is asked to be best man at a friend's wedding, he urges Rachel to travel with him and meet his family. As they leave for Singapore, the professor is shocked to discover that he is from one of the wealthiest families in Asia and is the heir apparently (one can only assume that she doesn't use Google at all and stays off social media). After being introduced to Nick's mom Eleanor (Michelle Yeoh), it becomes clear that the family matriarch is prideful and may take issue with Rachel's modest background.

If you're wondering why Nick chose not to give even a tiny bit of background information on his family or a heads up on how to act around the people she's bound to encounter, you're not alone. Excuses are made, but it's a stretch to buy into the concept. At least the lead characters are likable. And there's some amusing gags when Rachel visits school chum Peik Lin Goh

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(Awkwafina), an eccentric friend who fills her in on all of the information that, well, Nick should have provided. In the scenes that she appears, the actress even sells some physical comedy and ends up making the biggest impression.

There are a few cute moments here and there as fish-out-of-water Rachel tries to fit in with her new surroundings, but much of the plotting feels awfully familiar. Nick's many relations are grandly introduced, but with the exception of Astrid (Gemma Chan), most are pushed aside and forgotten. Many jokes and supporting character gags fall flat and a sequence involving bachelor party shenanigans feels like it belongs in an entirely different movie.

And while the leads are nice, they're almost too genial. Their relationship is perfect given the circumstances and not much happens in the film that truly tests it. As the story progresses, it only becomes about satiating Eleanor and trying to get the mother to approve of Rachel. Nick doesn't do a whole lot and the protagonist's attempts to use game theory don't really make the emotional impact that they should. In watching the film, one wonders how much more interesting and conflict-ridden the entire enterprise could have been had Nick fallen for a woman with a more blunt or quirky personality (maybe even something closer to the Peik Lin Goh character). Oh well.

As a travelogue, the movie looks great. The locations used, including and the Marina Bay Sands resort, the Gardens by the Bay and Langwaki are beautifully captured. And the cast do their best with the material given to them. It's just unfortunate that all this hard work is in service to a predictable screenplay that resembles a Lifetime cable TV-movie. *Crazy Rich Asians* has its moments, but could have been much better had it not adhered to the Hollywood formula. It'll serve its purpose for fans of these types of films, but won't make a lasting impression.

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