

'Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates' is a missed opportunity

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

Running Time:
98 min.

In a summer full of sequels, it's rare to find a movie that offers something a bit different.

Thankfully, the new film *Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates* features an original concept. It also offers a premise that suggests plenty of comedic potential. But do the filmmakers end up making the most of it?

Dave (Zac Efron) and Mike Stangle (Adam Devine) are lug-headed brothers who want nothing more than to party and have a good time. Unfortunately for family members, their escapades often result in collateral damage to both property ... and people. When their sister Jeanie (Sugar Lyn Beard) announces she's getting married, the two agree to tone down their shenanigans for the Hawaiian wedding.

Their dad (Stephen Root) is far more explicit — find dates for the nuptials who will behave. Of course, these guys are quickly manipulated by a pair of wild waitresses/roommates named Alice (Anna Kendrick) and Tatiana (Aubrey Plaza). The pair just wants a free vacation. But while they put on airs, their behavior frequently lapses into drunken binges, creating disaster for the bride and family.

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It's unfortunate that there's such an emphasis on slapstick humor. The movie seems to waste a solid cast on a bland screenplay. There are a few offhanded comments that earn a chuckle, particularly when the ladies are insulting the brothers — there's a funny line in which one of the dates describes Mike as a funhouse mirror version of a good-looking guy. Unfortunately, for every aside or improvisation that is amusing, there are three times as many obvious and bluntly delivered gags.

"Exaggerate everything" seems to have been the on-set mantra. It forces the cast members to regularly bug out their eyes, react with over-the-top mannerisms and practically scream punch lines at the end of scenes. All of the broad characters featured in the movie seem excessively dimwitted. That's well enough for the main siblings, but family members and normal supporting characters don't come off as any wiser or more intelligent.

And the four leads could have been better developed. Alice has an acceptable motivation for her behavior, but the others seem simply dopey. In truth, there should have been stronger rationales for Alice and Tatiana. Any definitive reason to see the women plot and seize an opportunity to destroy Mike and Dave's lives in a tropical locale would add some purpose and much-needed edge to the proceedings.

Instead, viewers will see a very mundane and run-of-the-mill story, in which the four characters start to feel badly about their past actions and come to develop real feelings for each other (between pratfalls and forced, embarrassing situations). One can't help but feel like this was a missed opportunity by all involved to go down a darker comedic road. In some respects, the events onscreen didn't feel dramatically different from watching an Adam Sandler vehicle.

Sadly, the cast of *Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates* does all it can, but it only ekes a few laughs out of the underwritten and largely unfunny material. This date simply isn't as memorable as it should have been.

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