

‘Bad Moms’ are more bland than badly behaved

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

Running Time: 101 min.

Bad Moms is the latest comedy from the writers of *The Hangover* series, who made their directorial debut with the underwhelming flick

21 & Over

(2013). Promos for this effort promise the same kind of wild shenanigans for mothers as the filmmakers have depicted for bachelor parties and college students. Admittedly, the concept has potential, and it features a great cast. Alas, this title is far more generic than one might expect

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Bad Moms

even seems like a misnomer;

Bad Husbands and Children

is far more apt.

Amy (Mila Kunis) is a harried working mom struggling to juggle a career and family. Unfortunately, her family doesn't seem to be helping her in the least. Husband Mike (David Walton) is, well, an idiot who expects to be waited on hand and foot, and her children are no different. She finally reaches her breaking point, kicking Mike out and deciding to run against judgmental and snooty Gwendolyn (Christina Applegate) for the head of the PTA. Along the way, Amy commiserates with moms Kiki (Kristin Bell) and Carla (Kathryn Hahn). Frustrated, the trio begins to shirk the ridiculous duties expected of them.

First, the good news. These are very funny ladies, and when they gather to shoot the breeze and riff on the trials of parenting, they deliver some funny stuff. Carla's crude and blunt comments result in some laughs. Tied-down Kiki also earns some yuks; her fantasy of being horrifically injured and hospitalized so that she won't have to tend to her family is amusing. And

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there is an entertaining montage wherein the women go out to a supermarket to buy booze. However, that’s about as outlandish as events get. It’s unfortunate that the performers are trapped in a dull and bland story that doesn’t allow them to truly be the bad moms viewers want to see.

Besides tossing a few insults around and throwing a party, the majority of gags revolve around Amy attempting to win a heated PTA election. Not exactly edgy material here. Threats are made by the nasty Gwendolyn, but no outrageous pranks or sabotage is attempted by the leads. Any time the movie makes a biting remark or seems to be leading to something raunchy, the script hedges its bets. For every joke directed at their kids, a character will deliver a line like, “I know we make fun of our kids, but I love them so much.”

In fact, it’s so broadly written, there’s an air of falseness surrounding the whole enterprise. There’s also a serious problem with the supporting cast. As written, Mike appears to be one of the worst, dimmest husbands ever witnessed. This exaggerated behavior could work in a zany comedy, but there’s so much sappiness and sentiment wedged in between the humor that it doesn’t play. Mike is so clueless that not only is it difficult to buy, but one can’t help but wonder if he might actually be suffering from a traumatic brain injury. The majority of family members are one-note with, of course, the exception of widower/man-of-Amy’s-dreams, Jessie (Jay Hernandez). He’s clearly supposed to be perfect in every way, which is, well, also kind of dull.

Clearly, I’m not the target audience for *Bad Moms*. This movie is intended to hit a very specific demographic, and the screenplay is blatantly obvious in its manipulations. However, the cast is very talented, and could have executed a dark, satirical comedy about moms behaving badly and breaking convention. That does not happen here; these moms are more bland than bad.

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