The Screen Savor: You, Me, & Dupree

by Kimberly_Gadette

YOU, ME AND DUPREE â€¦ DOESN'T ADD UP

I have a theory: Maybe after the success of "Wedding Crashers," Owen Wilson and Vince Vaughn met for a fancy-schmancy Hollywood lunch near the intersection of Warner Bros. and Universal. Toasting, they announced that with their next projects, each would produce and star in weak comedies with poor writing, little direction and underdeveloped characters. Call it wacky, but my explanation is as good as any for a) "The Break-Up" and now b) "You, Me and Dupree." And if the two stars kept toasting each other from lunch to dinner? Go ahead and laugh. No, I mean it â€¦ please laugh. Given the laugh-lite properties of this film, you might as well grab a snicker while you can.

The reed-thin plot mixes Peter Pan with a singular Meet the Parent: Jobless and homeless, the best manchild crashes onto the couch and love nest of his newlywed friends. Oh, and the bride's father (Michael Douglas) hates his new son-in-law. That's it. A plot that makes the pitch for Spongebob Squarepants sound like Chekhov.

The movie poster for "You, Me and Dupree" shows a large close-up of Dupree (Owen Wilson), surrounded by the half-faces of Carl (Matt Dillon) and Molly (Kate Hudson) as they are being squeezed out of frame. This makes for an interesting foretelling, especially since Carl and Molly are merely, literally, half-drawn. But most problematic is the character of Dupree. If Dupree is the main force behind the story, why is it we know nothing about him? Per Carl, "He was born on the wrong island." Yet if Dupree can't get from A to B without messing up, how is he the bonding glue that cements the lovebirds back together? If his self-described "languisher" and "floater" is so light on brains, how is it that he reads Mensa publications in his spare time?

The idea of a 36-year-old man with no sense of direction is highly reflective of these tough economic times. But instead of an offhand reference, even in comedy, we deserve an explanation. What, specifically, is Dupree's story? How and why did he and Carl become best friends? If there's little connection between the two friends on screen, and no allusion to their history in the script, then not only are the characters shortchanged, but so is the audience.

Wilson does his winsome, Valley-boy routine again, and he shows some spark. However, unless he starts taking his craft seriously, by its very definition "boyish charm" has an all-too obvious expiration date.

But it's Matt Dillon who draws the shortest straw. A marvelous actor who's been turning in solid to great performances for over 26 years ("Bodyguard," "Drugstore Cowboy," "Crash," the little-known "Employee of the Month"), Dillon is straight-jacketed into playing a dour party-pooper, a sulking groom who can't communicate with his luminous bride. On the other hand, Kate Hudson is perfect at playing, well, perfect. A blonde that even brunettes can't help but like, she's the only pop in the pic who manages to keep her individual brand of fizz from fizzling out.

Since the brothers Russo have previously directed "Arrested Development," one would think they would have a grasp on comedic style. Yet the film wavers between reality (oh no! the lovebirds are having a real conflict!) to farce (the father-in-law suggests a vasectomy to the groom, freshly returned from his honeymoon). One would think that with two directors and three highly-to-fairly experienced actors, the whole would be greater than the sum of its parts. But with a minimal plot and only trace amounts of comedy, style or substance, well â€¦ you do the math.

Grading this movie on the curve of the Deschutes River: C

Production Credits: "You, Me and Dupree"

Directed by Anthony Russo and Joe Russo

Written by Mike LeSieur

Cast: Owen Wilson, Matt Dillon, Kate Hudson, Michael Douglas

Rate: PG-13

Running Time: 108 minutes