

Movie Review: 'Knocked Up'

by *David_Elliott*

What an odd comedy (and a sure hit) "Knocked Up" is - an attitude bazooka full of sex, drugs and raw language, yet so high on babies and family values that this must be the first R-rated film for both sleazoid slackers and earnest right-to-lifers.

'KNOCKED UP' - Katherine Heigl and Leslie Mann ponder the meaning of a pregnancy test in the romantic comedy 'Knocked Up.' CNS Photo courtesy of Suzanne Hanover. There are jokes about condoms, throw-ups, lap dancers and sex "doggie style." But when rising E! channel show cutie Alison gets pregnant, abortion is barely considered. Alison's one-night lover, the Web-siter and party dude Ben, turns the word to gibberish, and it's dismissed. Onward, fertile America!

Judd Apatow of "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" wrote and directed, connecting the dots so that many explode into laughs. His casting is super. Katherine Heigl is a peachy blonde in the Cameron Diaz mode, but also like Doris Day rescued from prudery. Seth Rogen as funny stoner Ben drips deadpan zingers and seems to have studied the inflections of Albert Brooks.

Not averse to hanging forever with his dude posse, even relieving the stress of his family-way shocker by sucking a bong pipe while wearing a gas mask, big and hairy Ben can't quite believe a woman like Alison might want him, except when drunk. At first, of course, she's just rather desperate, but affection rises between the wisecracks; the actors are even subtle about it.

Characters all talk as if they had consumed a massive load of sitcoms and club comedy. Paul Rudd nails tight lines as Pete, acidic and bored husband of Alison's up-and-at-'em pal Debbie (Leslie Mann, Apatow's wife). Ben's chums are like updates of Cheech & Chong material.

It's amazing how much cultural confetti Apatow has packed into this comedy, a cram session of cameos, plugs and nods: Chewbacca, "the Dice thing" (Andrew Dice Clay), Cat Stevens, Meg Ryan, Tom Waits, Ryan Seacrest, "Munich," Robin Williams, Felicity Huffman, "The Sopranos," the Xbox 360, James Franco, Robert De Niro, Bob Marley, Red Bull drinks, Al Jarreau and several mentions of "Spider-Man 3" (an odd effect when this film previewed before "S-M3" opened).

The air-gunned plot shoots past slackerdom into pregnancy crises, then childbirth and baby snapshots. Call it love. However driven to girl talk and guy guff, the deft cast is winning, and the sweetest funny work is old pro Harold Ramis as Ben's supportive dad.

Giving Ramis close rivalry is a superb, one-scene monologue by Craig Robinson as a surly club doorman. Also surefire is the funniest sex-during-pregnancy yet filmed. And the deathless scene of vastly pregnant Alison trying to Zen-out in a bubble bath while Ben launches a phone tirade at her doctor.

RATINGS

4 STARS - Excellent.

3 STARS - Worthy.

2 STARS - Mixed.

1 STAR - Poor.

0 - Forget It (a dog.) When Ben and Pete zip to Las Vegas for a weekend of abandon, getting wasted to view Cirque du Soleil, it's the silliest weird use of Vegas since "Lost in America." For such moments, we can endure all the goo-goo.

A Universal Pictures release. Director, writer: Judd Apatow. Cast: Katherine Heigl, Seth Rogen, Paul Rudd, Leslie Mann, Harold Ramis, Craig Robinson. Running time: 1 hour, 39 minutes. Rated R. 3 stars.

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