

Movie Review: 'License to Wed'

by *David_Elliott*

"License to Wed" has a license to drop dead, and does.

Why anyone should peel away from their home screen for this defies belief, especially when it shall fairly soon be buried in full plastic honor as a DVD.

'LICENSE TO WED' - John Krasinski, Robin Williams and Mandy Moore star in the romantic comedy 'License to Wed.' CNS Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures. Directed by Ken Kwapis, a TV titan whose very name settles in quippishly with the quality of humor in the script, this laff pile was compiled (or composted) by writers we shall mercifully just call Kim, Tim, Vince and Wayne. That is more mercy than the movie extends to us.

Mandy Moore and John Krasinski play Sadie and Ben, who meet cute, fall in love cute, tease cute, quarrel cute. The setting is Chicago, which often looks rather cutely like Los Angeles.

Moore comes off as a giddy, wound-up Barbie, all doll, all the time. Krasinski, tall and genial, plays his Northwestern University grad as if he majored in Primeval Sitcom Humor.

But then comes the Ken Kwapis ace card, burning a hole right through the comic deck: Rev. Frank, played at the motorized lower level of his talent by Robin Williams. He shows us how flop sweat can wear a clerical

collar.

In order for Sadie to marry at her family church, she and Ben must submit to Frank's crash course in prenuptial exploration. This involves fake psychology, idiotic word games, queasy embarrassments, bits of physical cruelty, high-tech spying and Frank's indulging in fundamentalist "healing" even though he doesn't believe in it.

Williams, who has sometimes been a good actor, and very funny, seems to be passing around an alms plate for his retirement fund. He plays this vile snoop and control maniac as if attempting a Friars Club homage to the priest roles of Bing Crosby, but with a modern edge taken from a chainsaw. And he has a chubby sidekick (Josh Flitter, 12, of "The Greatest Game Ever Played") who treats him like God.

The low point must be when Ben and Sadie agree to carry around robot babies who look like bilious old men, in order to show that they deserve future parenthood. This leads to poop and throw-up gags worthy of "Bride of Chucky's Baby," and in a splurge of wit there is a forced parallel of the robo-babes and two real, black twins borrowed for the day from Ben's best friend.

No, the actual low point is when Rev. Frank forces the couple to do crazily dangerous driving, with blindfolded Sadie steering in city traffic. You have to go back to the worst Hanna-Barbera cartoons to find gag material this excruciatingly contrived.

RATINGS

4 STARS - Excellent.

3 STARS - Worthy.

2 STARS - Mixed.

1 STAR - Poor.

0 - Forget It (a dog.) Anyone care to upgrade from this levity by watching the worst Bob Hope comedies of the 1960s? Essentially, with "License to Wed," we've gone from Bob's "I'll Take Sweden" (1965) to this year's "I'll Take Turkey."

A Warner Bros. release. Director: Ken Kwapis. Writers: Kim Barker, Tim Rasmussen, Vince Di Meglio, Wayne Lloyd. Cast: Robin Williams, Mandy Moore, John Krasinski, Josh Flitter, Peter Strauss, Grace Zabriski. Running time: 1 hour, 38 minutes. Rated PG-13. 1 star.

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