



BOTTOM LINE:

What To Expect When You're Expecting hits some good notes, but doesn't exactly deliver where it counts.

Babies. Adorable enough, right? Their puffy cheeks, mesmerizing smile and sheer embodiment of innocence and joy. Babies are simply the greatest gift anyone could ask for. So why is Wendy (Elizabeth Banks) losing her mind and channeling insanity while carrying child? What has caused her to become exactly the opposite of what she imagined? For that, we might have to back up a bit.

Wendy is the owner of a small shop called The Breast Choice, an expectant mother's safe haven filled with children's books, bibs and other items to prepare every mother for the miracle of child birth. Having spent the past few years trying to get pregnant, Wendy and Gary (Ben Falcone) are getting close to the edge, tired of seeing failed tests and empty carriages. Until one day, negative quite literally turns to positive and Wendy finally finds herself with child. But they're not alone in their expectant excitement. Host of the popular weight loss show Lose It And Weep, Jules (Cameron Diaz) begins to realize her possibility fertility when she fills up her winning dance trophy with that morning's breakfast. Breaking the news to her dance partner/affair just brings good news as Evan (Matthew Morrison) reveals that he is in it for the long run. But it's not all pregnancies that create new parents. Holly (Jennifer Lopez), a popular photographer, begins the search for a possible new addition to her small family of herself and her husband Alen (Rodrigo Santoro). But is adoption what Holly and Alex need or just what they want? Regardless of their situations, everyone involved learns one thing: Pregnancy is a mother!

What To Expect When You're Expecting should play out as a humorous look into the world of pregnancies, hormones and all. And in a way, it does. Yet, it doesn't feel organic. Yes, Jules is a raging psychopath while being pregnant, but we're given the hunch that this wasn't much of a transition from the behavior of Jules prior to conception. Thus, the storyline of her going crazy on a rather unfortunate Matthew Morrison is rather stale. And when it comes time for apologies and reconciliation, Cameron Diaz plays her character as one with no regrets and a lack of compassion for her partner. Just the incompetence of this relationship makes the film feel unworth the time if an arch isn't met between two of the central characters. It's not so much the acting as it is the written nature of these characters and their actions. Color me unknowledgable as a male, but something just doesn't sit right about those scenes.

Outside of Jules and Evan, each relationship carries a fairly enjoyable story on its' own. The frustration of becoming ready for adoption between Holly and Alex is a simple, but fascinating look into the preparation of parenthood. Wendy and Gary have fun as the couple who couldn't wait for pregnancy, yet found out there is no way to fully be prepared for those 9 months. One of the better stories, however, comes from one where the news of expectancy wasn't welcomed with joy. The journey of Rosie (Anna Kendrick) and Marco (Chace Crawford) is cliché at times, but executes it well with great performances, heartwrenching moments and an extremely believable chemistry. The actual stories of What To Expect When You're Expecting, for the most part, come off entertaining, but that's not all that audiences are expecting from a star-studded cast.

At its' heart, What To Expect When You're Expecting has one collection of gentlemen to thank for nearly the entirety of humor (outside of Dennis Quaid playing a retired, egotistical Nascar driver): The Dudes Group. Frontlined by Chris Rock, comedians such as Thomas Lennon and Rob Huebel play fathers who created their own club to walk and get out all their frustrations about fatherhood and marriage. As the Dudes welcome Alex to their group, they describe how terrifying being a parent is at first, then grows into acceptance. Watching Rob Huebel's reaction his baby eating a cigarette is enough to get me interested. Yet, it feels as if these hilarious comedians were restricted and held back from their true potential. That was mostly in part to the PG-13 rating and a pretty tight script to follow. However, working with what they're given, Rock, Lennon and Huebel make the best of their characters and easily become the highlight of the film.



What To Expect When You're Expecting is about four product placements away from a truly enjoyable comedy, being held back by a few too many cliché scenarios. Humor runs rampant throughout, even if a large portion of said humor is gender specific. Then again, this is a film designed for the women. But as a comedy lover, it's hard not to expect more.

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