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Sandler's latest is tired, yet funny

'The Wedding Singer' is a mediocre movie, but still a good time

By Evan A. Denbaum
Entertainment Editor

Roger Ebert on TV's "Siskel and Ebert" called "The Wedding Singer" familiar and full of recycled material - "another visit by our old friend the idiot plot." And he's absolutely right.

But enjoying a movie is all about expectations, and if you go to see "The Wedding Singer" knowing it'll be a cliché caricature of the '80s, and expecting nothing but a good laugh, then you'll probably have a great time.

Much of the movie is spent laughing at, not with, the main characters. Sandler plays a wedding singer gone "postal," who, after being left at the altar, goes to great lengths to ruin the ceremonies at which he performs. He screams and mopes from his stage, lambasting loser guests, dooming marriages to failure and singing musical numbers such as "Love Stinks."

Unfortunately, many of the best moments were wasted on the film's trailers, and they felt old and tired by the time they were seen on screen.

While Sandler is over the top for much of the movie, he does pull off the part of the sensitive, sincere good guy with whom the audience can easily relate. In fact, we cling to the normalcy of Sandler's character because his supporting cast is a motley crew of laughable weirdos. His best friend is a brain fart of the '80s, dressing and acting like Michael Jackson right down to the sequined glove and moonwalk.

There's also a drunken, embittered best man played to perfection by Steve Buscemi; Sandler's

"psycho hose beast" of a fiancée (to steal a line from "Wayne's World"); Sandler's backup singer, who's basically Boy George except he/she only knows one song; and the misogynistic, cool-as-vice Don Johnson wannabe, whom the lovely Barrymore, unaware of his

fiancé. And to her credit, there is a genuine chemistry in her scenes with Sandler, coming across as sweet without being saccharine.

In one especially sweet scene, Sandler, who's singing at a bar mitzvah, sets up Barrymore with one "uncool" 13-year-old who has no one to dance with. To their surprise, however, the boy puts a move on Barrymore while dancing, which brings big laughs, and eventually everyone on the dance floor has their hands on their partners' butts. And "Wedding," which is full of similar lighthearted moments, gets away with it.

Sandler takes a number of cues from past films in "The Wedding Singer": His previous two movies were also released on Valentine's Day weekend with good success. The film is also appealing in a "Grosse Pointe Blank" sort of way, although with a decidedly less ingenious plot. And just as "Grosse Pointe" had enough songs to release two '80s compilations, "Wedding" stuffs in as many hit tunes as possible, filling any and all quiet moments with music. The interjection is often awkward and seems just for the sake of the soundtrack.

Still, aesthetically, it is fun to live through Sandler's '80s experience with both sight (heinous '80s fashions) and sound (songs from "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me" by the Culture Club to "White Wedding" by Billy Idol).

My friends and I often rate films on the basis of the admission price, and if you say that "The Wedding Singer" costs \$6 for the sake of argument, then I'd say it's worth about \$4.50. So, go catch a matinee with some friends, and if you don't expect too much, you'll have a lot of laughs.



MOVIE REVIEW

The Wedding Singer

Directed by Frank Coraci

■ **STARRING:** Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore

■ **GENRE:** Comedy

■ **RATED:** PG-13

■ **SCORE:** ★★★★★

infidelities, is planning to marry.

Honestly, what makes Sandler and Barrymore such a perfect pair is they're the only two characters with any depth at all.

Still, Barrymore's part asks very little of her. All she really is asked to do is light up the screen with that natural glow she has, which is enough to make you care that she ends up with the nice-guy Sandler instead of her slimy

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