

Lopez movie employs paltry plot planning

■ 'The Wedding Planner' does not show off the actress's talent with its intangible plot lines and predictable outcome

By Peter Martini
For the Emerald

Love and career should be kept separate. But this is not always an easy task for people in any profession, and when your job is planning weddings, it's especially tough. Yet we are to believe that Mary Fiore (Jennifer Lopez) manages to do so for the two years preceding the time we meet her in "The Wedding Planner."

What does the most prestigious wedding planner in San Francisco do on Friday nights? Play Scrabble? It is one thing to be too wrapped up in a career to find romance, but if Mary has time to participate in the Bay Area Scrabble Club, why does she not have time for a relationship?

While trying to earn a partnership in her agency, she falls in love with a groom-to-be and client, pediatrician Steve Edison (Matthew McConaughey), who's engaged to Internet tycoon Fran Donnelly (Bridgette Wilson-Sampras).

To complicate matters, Mary is also recently engaged. But her engagement was arranged by her old-fashioned father, who believes that a loving marriage can develop after the wedding.

Mary meets Steve when she gets her shoe heel stuck in a manhole in the path of a runaway dumpster, and Steve saves her life by pushing her out of the way. The scene is a little bizarre and unbelievable, but it works in setting up Steve as Mary's personal hero.

The director, Adam Shankman, then chooses to show a few more incidents where Steve and Mary save each other. Steve rescues Mary when her horse is spooked by Fran's mother. This scene is redundant because we already get the point that Steve is Mary's hero.

The other incident shows a role-reversal where Mary detaches a statue's concrete genitalia from Steve's hand. Again, no real pertinence to the plot, just another failed at-

tempt at slap-stick comedy.

The plot takes an awkward turn when Mary spots her ex-fiancé (from an earlier, failed engagement, not to be confused with the guy her father arranged for her to marry) while she and Steve are selecting flowers for his wedding. The film never gives any hint of the relationship before this scene and never alludes to it after. So it comes out of nowhere when Mary ducks under a table to avoid seeing him.

Shankman clearly wanted a scene with Lopez crawling around on the ground with her million-dollar-insured derriere in the air and saw no other way to accomplish it.

He tries to portray Fran as evil and not good enough for Steve. But Steve is the one falling in love with another woman behind Fran's back.

Fran and Steve agree to break their engagement because they don't feel the same way about each other as they did in college. Then, on the same day, Mary calls off her own engagement. All through the film, Mary's fiancé makes it clear how much he loves her, but gives her up to Steve because he just wants her to be happy. It's unrealistic to have two engagements broken in the same day and to see all four people happy with the result.

This role is uncharacteristic for Lopez, who usually plays dramatic roles, such as in the films "Selena" and "The Cell." She revealed in a recent Entertainment Tonight interview that she felt more comfortable in her role as Mary because it reflected her natural personality. When asked why she thinks people see her as a super sexy Jennifer Lopez and not the goofy Jennifer Lopez portrayed in the film, she said, "I think people judge the book by the cover and don't try to scratch the surface."

She also said in the same interview that being in a comedy was challenging because "if you can't gage what is funny, then you're dead."

But the challenge is not met. The film is poorly written and poorly directed. Lopez should not give up comedies as a whole, but she needs to find a better situation that allows her to truly show off her natural personality.

Prime time turns marriage into dysfunctional travesty

■ In recent decades, TV has transformed marital bliss into matrimonial hell

By Hank Hager
For the Emerald

From the Bradys to the Bundys, television has shown its ability to portray society in many different areas. One ever-present theme, whether obvious to the viewer or not, has always been marriage.

Matrimony used to be treated as a blessed union between two partners, but recent shows have given audiences something different.

From the early 1950s to the 1960s and 1970s, television treated marriage with respect.

Shows such as "Leave It to Beaver" and "The Brady Bunch," treated it as a sacred bond. If there was ever a fight between the two partners on the show, it was surprising news. Characters acted as though marriage was not a thing to be taken lightly.

The story is much different today.

One pioneering show that centered on marital negativity was "Married With Children." Viewers remember Al Bundy for his infamous wife defamation.

In one episode, Al said, "Everybody but

me is looking at good times. But for me, it's been one long continuous year since I got married. Actually one long month."

Show after show, the writers topped themselves in ways of showing Al Bundy's contempt for his wife.

This show is an example of sensationalistic television that profits from tapping into America's need to see dysfunction. The writers knew that audience members wanted Al and Peg Bundy to fight every week, and that is exactly what they gave them.

Though none of the characters on "Seinfeld" were married, they played off that same punch show after show. Though matrimony was not a main point of the show, its characters still took jabs at marriage whenever possible.

Cosmo Kramer, Jerry Seinfeld's wacky next-door neighbor, once informed Jerry what married life really was like.

"What are you thinking about Jerry, marriage? They're prisons. Man-made prisons. You're doing time," he said.

The irony of this message is that Kramer was never once mentioned to have been married throughout any of the shows. How could he have an opinion on something that he had never experienced?

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