

Hugh Grant still only DVD-worthy

Matt Olson

The Clackamas Print

With a tagline like "Imagine a country where the President never reads the newspaper, where the government goes to war for all the wrong reasons, and more people vote for a pop idol than their next President, 'American Dreamz,'" by Paul Weitz (both with a Z) is a satirical comedy that falls short of any biting irony, but succeeds at being a harmless comedy.

With a decent ensemble cast to compel the viewer through the predictable but enjoyable twists of fate in the film, "American Dreamz" comes to an explosive climax that doesn't really prove anything, but wraps things into a nice little bow. What it comes down to is that this movie is only kind of funny, and not as politically poignant as one might think. It's shot well, has a decent script, a good cast and has some interesting, if a bit clichéd, things to say about America, though it never becomes offensive.

It's so inoffensive in fact, that I would feel safe giving

Dick Cheney a shotgun and sitting in front of him during the movie, secure in the knowledge that all I'd get hit with would be some spittle as he laughed at super-metro Tony Yalda as Iqbal (hands-down the funniest character in the movie).

With a cast including Hugh Grant as the Ryan-Seacrest-knockoff Martin Tweed, Mandy Moore as the starlet Sally Kendoo, Dennis Quaid as the inept President Staton and Willem Dafoe as the puppeteer Chief of Staff "American Dreamz" is a movie wholly driven by its characters.

The movie starts with the dispassionate Tweed breaking up with his girlfriend because she's perfect and he's, well, lovably flustered (just like every other Grant character).

Despite the familiar persona, Grant manages to make you interested in his backwards Hollywood life over the course of the movie. Bringing in two-faced Kendoo compels Tweed to become frustrated with the stagnant show "American Dreamz," which he hosts and judges, and search for some "humanity" in his contestants.

Omer, a wacky wannabe ter-



Hugh Grant and Mandy Moore star in the would-be political satire "American Dreamz." The film was directed by Paul Weitz, of American Pie fame, but is surprisingly predictable.

rorist (played by Sam Golzari) comes to America to "contact a sleeper cell," but ends up being caught up in the "American Dreamz" TV show (competing against a Jewish rapper, peace in the middle-east anyone?). Ironically, the disillusioned

President Staton is now coming off of a three week long self-imposed isolation, and is booked to be a judge on the last episode of "American Dreamz" so he can reconnect with the public. Obviously such an opportunity cannot be ignored by the sleeper

cell, and Omer is contacted.

The movie is predictable, funny, ironically inoffensive, only half as good as it could have been. I'd say wait till it comes out on DVD, and don't be afraid to sit down and watch it with the family.

Concrete couch teaches students life lessons, post-modernism



Mike Kimberling Clackamas Print

Clackamas student Lucas Adams relaxes on the concrete couch in front of the Art Center, finding musical inspiration. "It's a really cool couch, but I'll never sit on it again," Adams said.

Mike Kimberling

The Clackamas Print

Sitting as a testament to time the way the great pyramids sit in Giza, the concrete couch of Clackamas defies all rules of modern "couch-ism."

Where a residential couch is governed by the comfort of its cushions or the fashion of its upholstery, the concrete couch brings an innovative approach to tradition by challenging our very notions of comfort.

The surprisingly realistic concrete couch may appear to the naïve as an oasis during a hectic school day. If ever a student should be so overcome with visions of idle-couch joy to actually attempt leaping upon the cushions, that student would not find the bouncing pleasures of a lazy Sunday afternoon but the cold reality of cement scraps and cracked ribs. Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned from the school's petrified sofa.

The concrete couch raises the question of complacency within our modern society. Does mankind sit upon buttocks too much? Has it found a false idol, a comfort zone from which protect him from the reality of the outside world? The act of simply sitting on cushions take us further from where we should be going. With such philosophical questions on hand, the concrete couch may in fact be our guide. The concrete couch teaches all who gaze upon it that appearance is deceiving and that sitting never greater than or equal to moving on.

Whether serving as an enchanted outdoor lover for goo-goo-eyed students or an oracle for the philosophically curious, the concrete couch of Clackamas radiates a postmodernist feel and a sense of compromise between what is traditionally accepted as comfort and exactly what arbitrary comfort can be.

'RV': overdone, predictable, cliché comedy that's campy fun

Adam J. Manley

The Clackamas Print

I'll say it right up front: "RV," starring Robin Williams, is campy, predictable and at times overdone. But it's damn fun to watch.

Movie camp has received a bad rap for a long time. The mere mention of bat-nipples is enough to send comic geeks and movie connoisseurs alike into a frothing rage that should rightly make everyone involved with "Batman and Robin" quake with fear.

And yet who among us doesn't have fond memories of Adam West and Burt Ward, living legends of camp, running around in bad costumes and vanquishing villains with a

mighty "POW!" or "BASH!"? "RV" doesn't come close to that level of camp, but it is fun in very much the same way.

Williams plays Bob Munro, the head of an upper-class family that has become emotionally distant. His formerly doting daughter is caught in the throes of teenage righteous alienation, his Eminem-esque son deals with an inferiority complex resulting from his small stature, and his married life has become a mind-numbing routine. He struggles to connect with his family while keeping ahead in a workplace that is passing him by in favor of a young business prodigy.

So when he is ordered by his boss to cancel his family's Hawaii vacation to attend a meeting in Colorado, he opts to turn the family vacation into

an RV trip to Colorado — without, of course, telling them about the meeting.

Add frequent run-ins with an overly friendly family of rednecks, headed by Jeff Daniels, and it sounds like a painfully overused Hollywood equation. Take one alienated family, drop them — begrudgingly — into a situation involving cramped quarters and constant closeness, and then add a few quirky supporting characters. Hilarity ensues.

The setup is so bad that when I told people what movie I was going to review the first words out of their mouths were "Oh, I'm sorry."

I'll admit, I was doubtful for the first few minutes. I was beginning to think that Williams had finally disappointed me with his choice of

roles. When the film hit its first truly overdone bit of campy schtick, it seemed to go on forever. I couldn't stop wondering how long they could possibly draw out a sequence of such obvious, predictable "humor."

But then something wonderful happened: in spite of myself, I began to laugh. The director, it seems, wasn't as dumb as he seemed. The length of the sequence became so absurd that I, and the rest of the audience, had no choice but to laugh.

That's the genius of "RV." Barry Sonnenfeld, director of such movies as "The Addams Family," "Get Shorty," and "Men In Black," didn't try to take a campy script and make a serious film out of it. He took a campy script and made

camp. Ridiculous, overdone, predictable camp. He took it to such a high level of camp that I couldn't take it seriously on any level, and instead sat back and allowed myself to enjoy it. And this is coming from someone who philosophically cannot sit through an episode of "The Flintstones" because of its campy predictability.

So yes, there are comic moments in any other movie that will be too long. There are overused stereotypes. It's often fully predictable. It frequently defies the laws of physics because it's intentionally that way, it works.

It's not cinematic masterpiece. It's not movie gold. It's camp. And surprisingly, that's one of the best things about it here.