



Love, Dishonor and Torment

Weddings don't bring out the best in women

BRIDESMAIDS: Directed by Paul Feig. Written by Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo. Cinematography, Robert D. Yeoman. Editors, William Kerr and Mike Sale. Music, Michael Andrews. Starring Kristen Wiig, Maya Rudolph, Melissa McCarthy, Chris O'Dowd, Jon Hamm and Rose Byrne. Universal Pictures, 2011. R. 125 minutes.

There is no safe place from which to approach *Bridesmaids*, unless you've managed to avoid a single poster, preview, article touting it as the future of female-driven comedy or column discussing how seeing it is a requirement to support women in the movie business. If you are that as-yet-un-sold-to person, congratulations. Please hold tight to your total lack of expectations. If not, please refrain from believing any idiotic comparisons to *The Hangover*.

Bridesmaids, which is filled with a self-aware sense of humor that draws more knowing, painful chuckles than fully belly laughs, acts as something of a palate-cleanser after the seemingly endless list of films in which women are plot devices, love interests and little else. Sure, thirtysomething Annie Walker (Kristen Wiig) would like to have a love interest, but her problems are hardly purely

man-related. A former bakery owner whose business and relationship folded simultaneously, Annie has a dead-end job she clearly loathes, a slightly kooky mother (Jill Clayburgh), a crass fuckbuddy (Jon Hamm) and a sweet best friend, Lillian (Maya Rudolph), who gets engaged about twenty minutes into the film.

Weddings, pop culture tells us, make women crazy. But Lillian has a steady head on her shoulders; it's Annie who freaks, the shiny glow of Lillian's engagement shining a bright glow on her own messy life. Not helping things further is the appearance of Helen (Rose Byrne), the oh-so-perfect other woman in Lillian's bridal party.

For a little while, *Bridesmaids* is painfully effective at demonstrating that women can be competitive assholes just like everyone else. Neither Helen nor Annie will cave when one outdoes the other while speechifying at Lillian's engagement party; each will take any chance to take the other down a peg, though Helen, cool and collected, appears to have a lot more practice at the underhanded destruction of her rivals via the careful application of pills and Scotch. Wiig and her co-writer and

longtime friend, Annie Mumolo, sometimes milk the resulting scenes for a little more than they're worth, and overlong transitions full of endless skylines give the film the stop-start momentum of a series of skits. But skittish or no, there's no forgetting Rudolph's Lillian sinking in horror into the street, overcome with food poisoning.

Wiig, as fearless an actress as ever, embraces Annie's mess, her negativity and her attempts to do the right thing, while her script is carefully balanced so that we're never entirely laughing at Annie; there's always a moment of painful recognition, even when Annie is at her worst. Selectively self-destructive and scared of being left behind, Annie is *Bridesmaids'* only fully formed character. Coming in second is Rhodes (Chris O'Dowd), a gently charming cop who takes a shine to Annie, and whose character doesn't exactly belong in the film. His presence emphasizes Annie's inability to reach for positive change, but when *Bridesmaids* turns its attention to him, its focus shifts from the thing the film does best — providing a sweet-and-sour take on female friendship, competition and the pressure to be what's expected of you. **EW**

Dig It

Unless you're Indiana Jones, a festival featuring films all about indigenous history and archaeological sites might sound like a drag. But yawn not — *The Archaeology Channel's* International Film and Video Festival, running through Saturday at The Shedd, delivers the kickass side of digging up stuff.

A total of 18 films, spanning a variety of subjects, will be judged on quality by audiences. "We are bringing to the competition the best films in the world," explains festival founder Richard Pettigrew. The locations covered by the line-up of movies range from Latvia to Australia.

Although the unofficial theme is archaeology and indigenous peoples, Pettigrew stresses that the festival isn't limited to these subjects alone. "It's all about being human," he says. "Archeology is a way of looking into the past."

The festival is more about learning, Pettigrew insists. "We (*The Archaeology Channel*) started out as a resource for education, for teachers looking for films with which to teach about the past," he says. "But we're not limiting our scope to teachers and education — we want everyone to get a sense of the human culture."

The human culture will be represented all right — every crazy aspect of it. For example, one of the films from the first day of the festival, *Ghosts of Machu Picchu*, describes not only beautiful ancient Peruvian cities but also features lots of what amounts to Incan zombies. On day two folks checked out *Guédelon: A Castle in the Making*, which focuses on a village in France where a complete recreation of a medieval castle is being constructed — from scratch, with no modern tools. All the films are like that, a mixture of upfront brainy goodness jazzed up with a little Indiana Jones-style awesome.

The big question is: Who among the nerds will be king?

The Archaeology Channel's International Film and Video Festival runs through May 28 at The Shedd; info & tickets at www.archaeologychannel.org — Brit McGinnis

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	5:15 7:20	3:00 5:15 7:20	1:00 3:00 5:15 7:20 9:30	1:00 3:00 5:15 7:20 9:30	5:15 7:20 9:30	5:15 7:20 9:30	5:15 7:20 9:30	5:15 7:20 9:30	
	AMERICAN: THE BILL HICKS STORY <i>Late Nite punch passes accepted!</i>								
	9:45	9:25	12:30 9:25	9:25	12:30 9:25	9:25	9:25	9:25	
	MEEK'S CUTOFF								
	5:10, 7:30	2:45 7:10	2:45 7:10	2:45 7:10	7:10	7:10	7:10	7:10	
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	5:45, 7:40	5:10	12:45 5:10	12:45 5:10	5:10	5:10	5:10	5:10	
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