

FILM REVIEW: Divorcee Returns to School in 'Life of the Party'

by Kam Williams
Of The Skanner News

Deanna Miles (Melissa McCarthy) was a junior in college when she got pregnant and dropped out of school to have the baby. She married her boyfriend, Dan (Matt Walsh), who finished his degree and kickstarted his career while she remained a stay-at-home mom.

Fast forward to the present and we find the couple dropping now-grown Maddie (Molly Gordon) off at their alma mater, Decatur University, where she's about to begin her senior year. She's happy to be moving back in with her girlfriends living at Theta Mu Gamma sorority

house. On the drive home, Dan drops a

bombshell on Deanna. He's canceled their planned vacation in Italy in favor of filing for divorce. Furthermore, the callous creep wants her out of the house, since it's in his name alone.

To add insult to injury, he's putting it on the market with the help of his mistress Marcie (Julie Bowen), a realtor in town. And he has the temerity to rub salt into his shocked wife's wounds by explaining the affair with, "I just needed an



'Life of the Party'

upgrade."

That cruel behavior frees Deanna to put some of his favorite belongings in a pile and set them on fire. Still, she's left in a quandary about what to do next, not having worked and or even graduated from college.

Then she comes up with the bright idea of returning to Decatur to do her senior year right along with her daughter. Too bad Molly's mortified about the prospect of having her mom on cam-

pus.

But that is precisely the premise of *Life of the Party*, a midlife crisis comedy directed by Ben Falcone and co-written by Ben and his real-life wife, Melissa McCarthy. The movie marks the couple's third and most successful collaboration, following the less funny "Tammy" (2014) and "The Boss" (2016). This offering is most reminiscent of "Back to School" (1986), the Rodney Dangerfield classic about a dad who

decides to matriculate at the same college as his son.

While Melissa McCarthy has undeniably been hilarious in buddy flicks and as part of an ensemble, a la "Bridesmaids" (2011), "The Heat" (2013) and "Ghostbusters" (2016), she remains yet to prove an ability to maintain that level of laughter carrying a star vehicle. That being said, this female-centric variation on "Back to School" is well worth the investment.

Very Good ★★★

Rated PG-13 for sexuality, partying and drug use

Running time: 105 minutes

Production Studios: New Line Cinema/ Warner Brothers / On the Day Productions

Distributor: New Line Cinema / Warner Brothers Pictures

To see a trailer for *Life of the Party*, visit: TheSkanner.com.

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slaves failed to usher in an era of freedom and true equality; to the visionary, such as assessing the prospects for minorities in the age of Trump.

In terms of the former, Stephenson asserts that "The North won the Civil War but the South won the narrative war. The South was able to persuade the United States Supreme Court that racial equality wasn't necessary." He laments the thousands of lynchings and other forms of terrorism which ensued that no one was held accountable for.

Similarly, he says, "We won passage of the Civil Rights Act. But we lost the narrative war." Consequently, the segregationists waving Confederate flags were still able to maintain de facto white supremacy, evidenced by schools named after disgraced rebels like Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee.

I doubt you'd find any statues of Hitler and his henchmen scattered around Germany. Why not? Because not only did the Nazis lose World War II, they also lost the subsequent cultural war, which explains why Stephenson concludes for our purposes, "The chal-



'A Perilous Path' authors Loretta Lynch, Bryan Stevenson, Sherrilyn Ifill, and Anthony G. Thompson

lenge we face is a narrative battle."

To order a copy of the

book, "A Perilous Path: Talking Race, Inequality, and the Law", visit: www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1620973952/ref%3Dnosim/theska-20

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