

Entertainment

THE UGLY TRUTH

Due to her chronic problem of finding a boyfriend stemming from her control issues, a morning TV talk show producer reluctantly accepts dating advice from the new guest commentator, a cable show host who delivers blunt commentary about women not understanding men’s basic sexual needs. Romantic comedy-Rated R.

Abby Richter (Katherine Heigl) is the producer of a morning TV talk show on KSSX in Sacramento. With the help of her assistant, Joy (Bree Hines), she tries to keep her show’s married hosts, Larry (John Michael Higgins) and Georgia (Cheryl Hines), happy despite the latter’s prima donna persona and her husband’s sexually frustrated life.

Abby isn’t much happier in her love life, due in part to her control issues, and is thus appalled when she happens to come across a cable access show called “The Ugly Truth” Its host, Mike Chadway (Gerard Butler), delivers blunt commentary on why he thinks women have problems landing and keeping men, basically stating that they don’t recognize their basic sexual needs. While it wouldn’t seem it could get worse than her taking the bait and calling in, only to have him put her in her place, it does the next day.

And that’s when she learns that he’s been hired by her boss, Stuart (Nick Searcy), for segments he hopes might boost the show’s sagging ratings. Abby is upset by this development, not only because it’s her show, but also because deep down she realizes Mike might be right about the whole man/woman romance issue.

Since she’s found herself attracted to her new neighbor, orthopedic surgeon Colin (Eric Winter), she reluctantly agrees to follow Mike’s advice. From that point on, she must contend with her disgust toward him and his beliefs, while he finds himself amused by her issues, with both eventually realizing there might be a spark developing between them.

Our take: 3 out of 10

When it comes to the mating game in the animal world, smells and scents might be incredibly important in terms of signaling who’s ready for what and where. Yet, visual cues are just as and sometimes even more important than their aromatic kindred. After all, a male raccoon can’t wander up to a female one and ask, “What’s a masked cutie like you doing in a garbage can like this?”

Humans, of course, can verbally communicate and thus indicate exactly what they’re interested in (while delivering pick-up lines far worse than the above), but they also continue to do so, in one-way or another, on more primitive and even subconscious levels.

While men often try to act enlightened about their baser instincts, and women hope/wish/demand that such guys see them as something beyond potential conquests, both sides need to realize and/or accept the ugly truth. **Warning: Gender generalizations to follow**

In short, men are hard-wired to look at women for their physical attributes and appearance, while the ladies obviously know that and thus wear make-up and sexy attire to try to make themselves more attractive to the

opposite sex. When either side pooh-poohs that fact and/or tries to buck that scenario, complications, conflict and maybe even just some comedy are sure to arise.

Or so hopes director Robert Luketic and writers Nicole Eastman and Karen McCullah Lutz & Kirsten Smith who take yet the umpteenth cinematic stab at addressing human dating and mating issues in “The Ugly Truth.” The rare, traditional style romantic comedy to be rated R rather than the usual, studio standard PG-13, the film contains a smattering of laughs, some quite attractive leads, and enough decent comedy-based adversarial meets romantic chemistry between them to get by.

Unfortunately, it follows the genre playbook to such a T that practically nothing will come as much of a surprise to anyone who’s seen this sort of rom-com before. Nor does it discover anything new or instill anything insightful about the eons old human mating ritual that hasn’t been covered before in far better films such as “When Harry Met Sally” or even the more recent (and less memorable) “He’s Just Not That Into You” from earlier this year.

Alas, even that doesn’t work that well, as the coarser (and sometimes explicit) content rarely matches that found in the Judd Apatow line of relationship films.

Thus, rather than the material coming off as crude yet witty, engaging and/or smart, it simply feels like a standard romantic comedy with an explicit coat of paint covering the same old, same old that’s simply way too predictable, coincidental and/or unbelievable to make us care.

Heigl and Butler are certainly easy on the eyes, but their characters are so rote (she being a beautiful woman whose “control freak” behavior scares off the guys, he’s a coarse but charming cad whose demeanor masks some degree of eventually revealed insecurity) and their relationship so utterly conventional -- they clash at first, he then helps her with her budding romance with a neighborly doctor (Eric Winter as the hunky doc), and then sparks finally start flying -- that there’s no surprise or sense of spontaneity.

Even the various “signature” set pieces -- a Cyrano type moment at the ballpark where Mike watches from afar and feeds Abby words and “how to get a guy” commands via an earpiece, as well as a supposedly embarrassing vibrating panties moment during a business meeting at a busy restaurant -- unfold exactly as one completely expects.

With just the right touch involving any of the writing, direction and/or acting, those moments could have become classics (think of Meg Ryan in the diner faking her sexual ecstasy in “WHMS”).

Sadly, they play out sitcom style, and while they might generate laughs of varying degrees in less-discerning viewers, the flat, conventional and unoriginal way in which they’re handled robs them -- and thus the viewer -- of all they could and should have been.

Many a member of both genders may wish “The Ugly Truth” ultimately had a smarter head on its shoulders and/or a bigger heart in its chest. The film rates as a 3 out of 10.

Musical

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theatre that continued into adulthood,” said Cason, who first attended the University of Redlands to study film scoring but changed his major to non-profit arts management halfway through the program.

After starting up a student theater group and civic light opera in Redlands, he returned to his old South Bay stomping grounds to work corporate events in Los Angeles.

Soon he was back at El Segundo Youth Drama, doing the theater work he loves most. “Many of my successes in life have come from the training and confidence the organization instilled in me,” Cason said. “This program is a cultural jewel in the community, a place for kids to grow as artists, learn lessons about teamwork and hard work, and be part of something magical.”

In truth, says Riordan, he wasn’t always

thrilled with the long hours the *Singin’ in the Rain* troupe needed to spend in rehearsal. Then again, he said with a laugh, “this is where I love to be.”

He thinks those who see the show will feel an extra boost of enthusiasm. “I know a lot of people have seen *Singin’ in the Rain* before,” Riordan said, “but it’s a different feeling on our stage. You can feel the energy from the actors. You feel like it actually is the 1920s and you’re singin’ in the rain with Don Lockwood.”

Added Cason: “It’s a wonderful live piece and radiates all the charm of the film.” Riordan put it another way:

More information about the El Segundo Youth Drama’s production of *Singin’ in the Rain* is available online at www.esyouth-drama.com, or by calling (310) 524-2700.

Penguin

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Well folks, the “cash for clunkers” program is still alive. So all of you out there wanting to offload your older rides need to get to it cuz the additional \$2 billion that has been magically found to continue the immensely popular handout could be tapped out by Labor Day. The good Senators voted 60 to 37 to approve the rebate program. But folks wanting to take advantage of the government’s largesse are urged to get on the stick, because many of the more popular new vehicles are already becoming harder to get.

Seems that with the crappy economy still dragging the country down, many car dealerships, at least those fortunate enough to still be in business, had astutely lessened their on-hand inventories. So when the rebate program took off like a brushfire on July 24, many dealers were working from

depleted stock.

But it has gotta be better for the car guys than sitting around the showrooms, twiddling their thumbs, hoping upon hope that someone, anyone, would stumble into the dealership pre-July 24.

Of course, the initial frenzy that greeted the program will probably abate. At least that is what one Aaron Bragman said. An auto industry analyst, Bragman said in print that “we are already seeing the pace of sales begin to slow down in Ohio and some of the states where the program has been really hot.” Thanks, bro. Just what we need, a dose of reality to curb our enthusiasm.

Guess it’s time for *Plank* to approach the wife again and see if she will part with the beloved Camry? Any guesses on who will win that discussion?

Opinion

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Recently, Obama has been claiming an economic recovery, since the economy declined at “only” 1 percent. What was not mentioned is that this “good” result was not derived from a recovery in consumer spending. Rather it was the result of a 10.9 percent increase in government spending, further driving the national debt.

That leads us to the topic of health care. The Administration repeats the mantra that there are 45 million without insurance, thus justifying more Federal mandates. Whether or not those are accurate statements is the subject for another time, but for today we should focus on the financial impact of Obama’s proposals. The proposals are projected to cost \$1.0 trillion to \$1.6 trillion over and above the \$3 trillion Obama has already committed to spend. Even Administration economists agree that this level of spending cannot be sustained without creating a new

financial crisis. Common sense tells us that universal health care can only be paid for by a broad based tax increase; increased government borrowing; reduced scope and quality of health care; or some combination of all three. Name your poison.

To summarize, Obama could have placed a premium on increasing consumer spending to create job growth and pull us out the recession, or he could have spent tax payer capital in social re-engineering. A July poll in the New York Times ranked economic growth (36 percent) as the most critical issue for the American public. Jobs (20 percent) came in second, and health care third at only 12 percent.

A July poll on Fox News listed the Economy first in importance at 27 percent while Health care was ranked only fifth at 8 percent. Obama has reversed the order of priorities. What say you? •

McCormick

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not discounted during happy hour, wines by the glass are priced reasonably with both five-ounce and eight-ounce options available.

The bar has also built a following for it classic cocktail selections, prepared using the timeless art of mixology—a method that involves specific types of glassware and spoons, pinpoint dilution ratios and garnish positions, and precise shaking techniques that require plenty of practice. Current faves include the Summer Sangria, Caipirinha, Blackberry “Chill” Martini and Parisian Sidecar, along with a number of flavored martinis.

On Tuesdays from 6 p.m. to 10:30 on the patio-only, the restaurant presents its “Classic Nights Cocktail Menu”, featuring special prices on hand shaken margaritas, lemondrop martinis, Tommy Baham Mai Tais, cosmopolitans and sangria, as well Kendall Jackson wine, Budweiser and Widmer Hefeweizen. Oh, and by the way, if you want to venture

beyond happy hour, McCormick & Schmick’s of course also has a full menu highlighted by its calling card of 30 to 40 seafood choices featuring fresh fish and shellfish from all over the globe prepared in a variety of ways. The menu changes daily—what’s on it depends on what is freshest that day and the where it is caught. Steaks, poultry, chops, pastas, sandwiches, soups, salads and desserts round out the plethora of options—all of which can keep customers happy regardless of the hour.

McCormick & Schmick’s Seafood Restaurant is located at 2101 Rosecrans Avenue. It’s open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and until 10:30 p.m. on Sunday.

For more information, call 310-416-1123, or go online to <http://www.mccormickandschmicks.com/Locations/southern-california-los-angeles/el-Segundo-california/RosecransAve.aspx>. •

Bargain

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anything online, factor in any shipping or return costs that might undo your savings.

Understand your school’s dress code so you don’t buy inappropriate clothing.

For help devising a workable budget, visit Visa Inc.’s free personal financial management site, Practical Money Skills for Life. Its Back-to-School Budgeting section contains an interactive budgeting calculator, online shopping tips and much more (<http://www.pmsfl.com/personalfinance/savingspending/budgeting/backtoschool.php>). (Note to Lee/ Eric: Can you devise a vanity link to this

new page? We used to have one called “.../backtoschool” that went to the old version of this site, but now that takes you to last year’s Back-to-School article instead, where it was originally referenced. Maybe re-route that same link to this site?)

In these lean times, make sure you’ve got a sound battle plan before entering the back-to-school shopping fray.

Jason Alderman directs Visa’s financial education programs. To sign up for a free monthly personal finance e-Newsletter, go to www.practicalmoneyskills.com/newsletter. •