

## Blu-Ray Review: Unfunny 'Women in Trouble' Confuses Vulgarity With Insight

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CHICAGO – The best thing about this alleged comedy is its title, evocative of David Lynch's signature premise: "A woman in trouble." Yet while Lynch has been accused of misogyny by some filmgoers, Sebastian Gutierrez's "Women in Trouble" purports itself to be an empowering portrait of strong female characters. Their strength is often demonstrated by their ability to cuss and talk about sex. Boy, how far we have come.

The film was warmly embraced upon its premiere at the SXSW festival, which further proves that festival atmosphere can often be spiked with over-enthusiasm clouding critical analysis. Kevin Thomas of the LA Times went so far as to compare the film to George Cukor's classic ensemble comedy "The Women," while others have contrasted the director's insight into the female psyche with that of Pedro Almodovar. That's pretty high praise to throw at a filmmaker who's best known for writing "Snakes on a Plane."



Blu-Ray Rating: **1.5/5.0**

Gutierrez's female characters are so formulaic that they make one yearn for the materialistic, proudly shallow women of "Sex and the City," who at the very least have tangible personalities. Nearly any line delivered by the hilariously self-centered Samantha (Kim Cattrall) is funnier than the entirety of Gutierrez's script. His dialogue is so self-consciously written that you can practically see the teleprompter reflected in the eyes of his actors, who are all far more deserving of better material. The film is structured like an estrogen-fueled "Crash," as the lives of various LA women collide, thanks to a series of contrivances. When one woman (Connie Britton) inexplicably asks another (Carla Gugino) to meet her at a hospital, despite the fact that they've only met once before, Gutierrez has Britton say, "I do have friends, I'm not a weirdo!" as if that line will make up for the laziness of his plot structure.



Emmanuelle Chriqui and Adrienne Palicki are two of the actresses whose talent goes to waste in Sebastian Gutierrez's Women in Trouble.

Photo credit: Screen Media Films

The film opens on the set of a porn movie, which sets the awkwardly amateurish tone for the rest of the picture. The characters include a dim-witted call girl (Adrianne Palicki) with sexual-hang-ups, a psychiatrist (Sarah Clarke) reeling from her husband’s infidelity, a neurotic (Britton) desperate to connect with her estranged daughter (Isabella Gutierrez), and a porn star (Gugino) facing an unexpected pregnancy. The “trouble” these women find themselves in never rises above the level of worn soap opera clichés. The bawdy humor and four-lettered raunch is meant to spice up the plot, but the painfully lame gags routinely land with an embarrassing thud. Here’s a typical example of the film’s screwball banter: Palicki likes a guy because, “I could feel him mentally undressing me with his eyes,” to which her friend replies, “We were working in a strip club!”



There’s a lot of good acting in the film, particularly from Gugino and Britton, but it’s all done in vain. The characters repeatedly strike sustained quirky poses that stretch all credibility, such as when Gugino and Gutierrez smoke invisible cigarettes. There’s also a bizarre use of loud flash-frame montages in the midst of quiet dialogue scenes, as if the director felt the need to wake bored viewers. The ensemble includes familiar faces like Marley Shelton and Josh Brolin (in their third consecutive onscreen pairing), while the wonderful Joseph Gordon-Levitt doesn’t show up until a forced skit after the end credits. My exasperated feelings about the film were succinctly summarized by the precocious Ms. Gutierrez when she asked, “Why do they call them adult movies when they’re so juvenile?”

“Women in Trouble” is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), and includes no redeeming extras. There’s two additional minutes of riffing from the not-so-classic comedy duo of Elektra Luxx (Gugino) and Holly Rocket (Palicki), who list reasons why people should not see the movie (apart from the obvious reason that it sucks). The deleted scenes are merely the complete monologues of patients from Clarke’s dream montage, one of the only genuinely clever sequences in the film. There’s also a teaser trailer consisting solely of cast members swimming in their lingerie, which clearly illustrates what Gutierrez had at the forefront of his mind.

*‘Women in Trouble’ is released by Screen Media Films and stars Carla Gugino, Connie Britton, Adrianne Palicki, Emmanuel Chriqui, Sarah Clarke, Caitlin Keats, Isabella Gutierrez, Simon Baker, Marley Shelton, Josh Brolin and Joseph Gordon-Levitt. It was written and directed by Sebastian Gutierrez. It was released on February 16th, 2010. It is rated R.*



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