

Blu-Ray Review: ‘Jumping the Broom’ Stumbles Over Clichés

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on August 17, 2011 - 8:16am

- [Angela Bassett](#) [2]
- [Blu-ray Review](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [Jumping the Broom](#) [5]
- [Loretta Devine](#) [6]
- [Matt Fagerholm](#) [7]
- [Mike Epps](#) [8]
- [Paula Patton](#) [9]
- [Salim Akil](#) [10]
- [Sony Pictures Home Entertainment](#) [11]
- [Theater, TV, DVD & Blu-Ray](#) [12]

CHICAGO – Salim Akil’s “Jumping the Broom” is the sort of sociological comedy so hell-bent on smothering the audience in a sentimental love-fest that it quickly softens its potentially biting premise. Akil’s background in television (“The Game,” “Girlfriends”) may explain why the film feels like an uneasy melding of sitcom and soap opera clichés. Any time the film threatens to become interesting, it instantly goes into autopilot.

Angela Bassett is one of the finest actresses of her generation, but she rarely gets a role worthy of her abilities. She’s played many uptight and humorless characters in the past, but few have been as insufferable as Mrs. Watson, a woman so high up in the upper crust echelon of Martha’s Vineyard residents that she can’t get agitated without spontaneously breaking into French.



Blu-Ray Rating: **2.0/5.0**

Yet Watson is a delight compared to Mrs. Taylor, played by Loretta Devine, whose perky voice and killer timing are put to the service of a character no more likable than Rasputia in “Norbit.” Her attempts to sabotage the wedding of her son Jason (Laz Alonso) are flat-out cruel, but screenwriters Elizabeth Hunter and Arlene Gibbs are all too eager to forgive her indefensible actions and expect the audience to follow in step. There are more unearned hugs in this picture than any wedding film in recent memory. Even the central love story between Jason and Mrs. Watson’s daughter, Sabrina (the ever-radiant Paula Patton), is incredible. It’s obvious from the get-go that the two lovers aren’t meant for each other, and instead of developing their relationship, the filmmakers resort to a series of grand gestures emblematic of a love life that is left off-screen.

In the romantic pre-title sequence, Jason warns Sabrina to not tell his macho friends that he took her to the opera. His self-conscious obsession with the perceptions of others extends to those of his meddling mother, who will stop at nothing to force her son to implement the age-old tradition of “jumping the broom” into his wedding. This tradition dates back to the time of slavery, when couples unable to marry found alternate ways of expressing their devotion. Yet the script drains this ritual of its meaning and poignance, opting instead to make it the latest manipulative MacGuffin in Mrs. Taylor’s crusade for control.



Paula Patton and Angela Bassett star in Salim Akil's *Jumping the Broom*.
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

The ads play up the dichotomy between the upper-class Watsons and the working class Taylors, but aside from one admittedly funny scene, this satirical approach to the material is entirely abandoned in favor of melodramatic plot twists. Like every comedy set at a wedding, there's an obligatory toast around an endless rectangular table when all of the characters' pent-up neuroses are brought out into the open, and it's here when the film becomes momentarily entertaining. Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Taylor clearly both have Lessons To Learn, but it's fun watching Bassett and Devine take part in such nasty behavior. Viewers expecting a showdown between the two actresses (who memorably co-starred together in 1995's "Waiting to Exhale") will be sorely disappointed, since the characters are routinely upstaged by a plethora of needless subplots. The worst involves Amy (Julie Bowen), one of the few white people allowed in front of the lens, whose xenophobic remarks sound straight out of an outdated "All in the Family" episode (she walks around the party asking things like, "Is sunscreen something you would use?"). Even at an overlong 112 minutes, the film hasn't even begun to adequately explore the issues raised by its alleged premise. It all ends with friendly hugs and warm reassurance wrapped in the unsettling aura of phoniness.



ANGELA BASSETT PAULA PATTON LAZ ALONSO LORETTA DEVINE MIKE AND EPPS

JUMPING THE BROOM



"FUN, SMART AND HEART-TUGGING."
-Kevin Thomas, LA Times

copyrighted material

Jumping the Broom was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on August 9, 2011.

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

"Jumping the Broom" is presented in pristine 1080p High Definition (with a 1.78:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French and Descriptive audio tracks, and includes a fair amount of BD Live-enabled features. In a 24-minute behind-the-scenes documentary, producer/co-star T.D Jakes dominates the conversation with his impassioned analysis of the film's characters and message of unity. It was Akil's intention for his leads to be evocative of classic Hollywood stars and he notes that he wanted his viewers "to go back to a time when we were so elegant," namely the time evoked by Sidney J. Furtie's 1972 Billie Holiday biopic, "Lady Sings the Blues." The script's broad strokes (such as Willie's all-green wardrobe) were toned down considerably by the director, who also avoided stereotypically colorful production design typified by Kente cloth curtains. The film's picturesque location in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia posed some unforeseen challenges for the actors, forcing Bassett to pause mid-sentence during a key scene whenever a nearby foghorn drowned out her voice.

There's also a brief featurette on the legacy of "jumping the broom," its function as a symbolic cleansing, and how it has allowed African Americans to reconnect with their ancestors. Akil, Patton and Alonso's back-slapping commentary offers little insight, apart from some trivia for fans. It was Patton and Alonso's idea to incorporate the pinky swearing tradition into their relationship, and though Akil initially dismissed it as "too corny," he eventually warmed up to it. Alonso succinctly summarizes the importance of renewing interest in the broom ritual: "If we lose touch with our traditions, we have nothing left that links us to the past." Too bad this film is so forgettable.

'Jumping the Broom' is released by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment and stars Paula Patton, Laz Alonso, Angela Bassett, Loretta Devine, Meagan Good, Tasha Smith, Julie Bowen, DeRay Davis, Valarie Pettiford and Mike Epps. It was written by Elizabeth Hunter and Arlene Gibbs and directed by Salim Akil. It was released on August 9, 2011. It is rated PG-13.



[13]

By [MATT FAGERHOLM](#) [14]
Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
matt@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 12:49am):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/15292/blu-ray-review-jumping-the-broom-stumbles-over-clich-s>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/mattmoviemann>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/angela-bassett>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/blu-ray-review>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jumping-the-broom>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/loretta-devine>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/matt-fagerholm>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/mike-epps>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/paula-patton>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/salim-akil>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sony-pictures-home-entertainment>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/dvd-theater-tv-news>
- [13] <mailto:matt@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#MATT>