

Film Review: Lack of Narrative Focus Handcuffs ‘Answers to Nothing’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 2, 2011 - 7:43pm

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CHICAGO – Ensemble films, with their multiple stories and characters, can be a challenging delicate balance. Emphasize one story over another and an audience starts to wonder why the neglected subplot is even in the film. “Answers to Nothing” generates this reaction with all their narrative threads, in a movie that lacks any kind of cohesion.



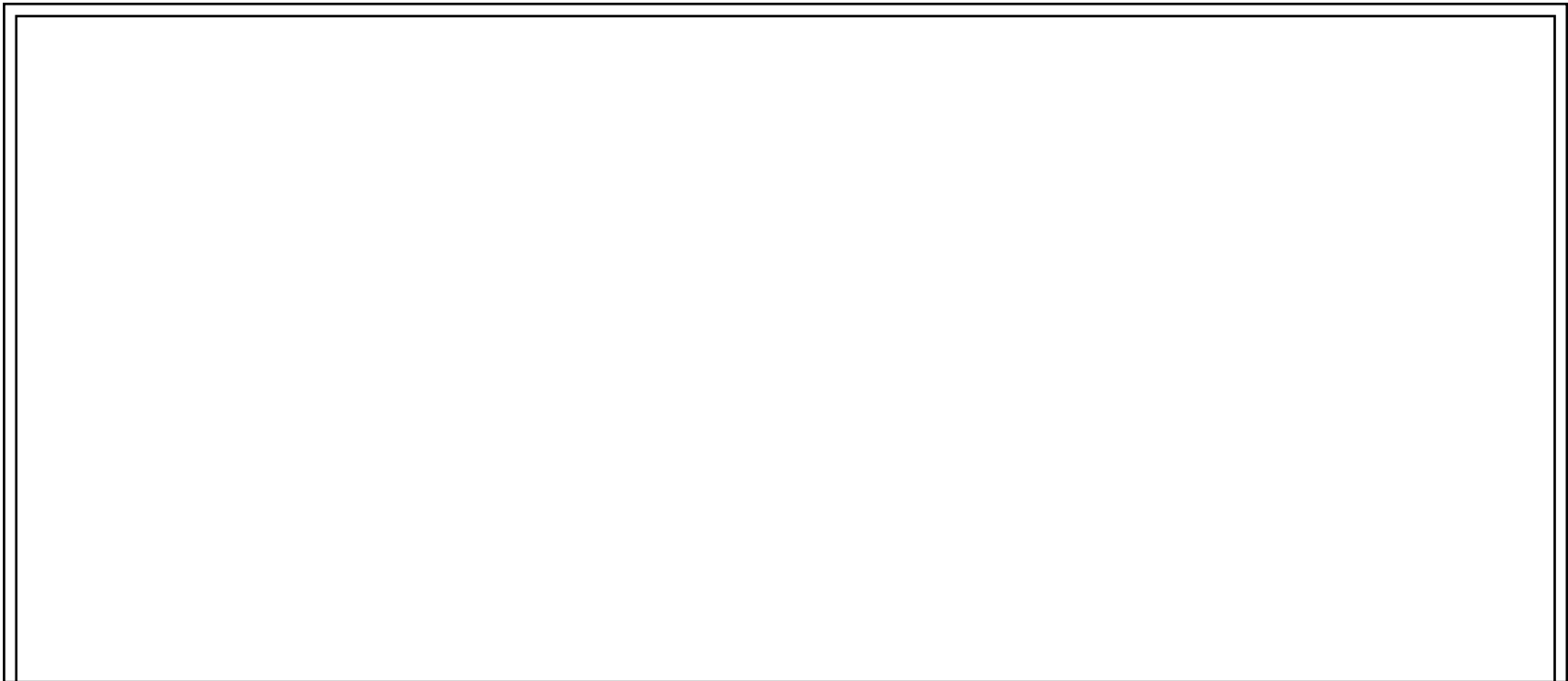
There are competent actors in the scenarios, comedian Dane Cook has been all right in other films, TV veterans like Erik Palladino and Elizabeth Mitchell have proved their worth in that medium, but they can’t levitate a script (written by Matthew Leuwylers – who also directs – and Gillian Vigman) that lacks motivation for what it is presenting, leaving the characters fumbling around with “important matters” that leave them literally sweating.

The film opens with a gross but promising piece of doggerel. Ryan (Dane Cook), a therapist, is having an affair with Tara (Aja Volkman) and the result is he now has a sample for in-vitro fertilization with his wife Kate (Elizabeth Mitchell). In the meantime Kate’s friend, a police detective named Frankie (Julie Benz), is on the case of a child abductor, the kind of breathless kidnapping that is updated for ratings on the local news every night.

There are more connections in the film. Kate is a lawyer, who is fighting a custody case for Drew (Miranda Bailey), a recovering alcoholic who is caring for an invalid brother. One of Ryan’s patients is Allegra (Kali Hawk), who has race and relationship issues. She meets Evan (Zach Gilford), who works as a sound guy at a club, that features Tara as a rock singer. A teacher named Carter (Mark Kelly), is obsessed with the child abduction, and seeks any justice through an unbalanced police officer named Jerry (Erik Palladino) that lives in his building. Oh yes, and Marilyn (Barbara Hershey) is the mother of Ryan, and believes her husband will come home from a business trip he has been on for nine years.

“Answers to Nothing” opens December 2nd in select cities. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Dane Cook, Elizabeth Mitchell, Julie Benz, Barbara Hershey, Mark Kelly, Kali Hawk, Zach Gilford and Erik Palladino. Screenplay by Matthew Leuwylers and Gillian Vigman. Directed by Matthew Leuwylers. Rated “R”

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Melancholy Dane: Ryan (Dane Cook) and Kate (Elizabeth Mitchell) in ‘Answers to Nothing’

Photo credit: Roadside Attractions



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