

Blu-ray Review: Terrible ‘This Means War’ Denies Its Obvious Romantic Subtext

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on May 30, 2012 - 4:59am

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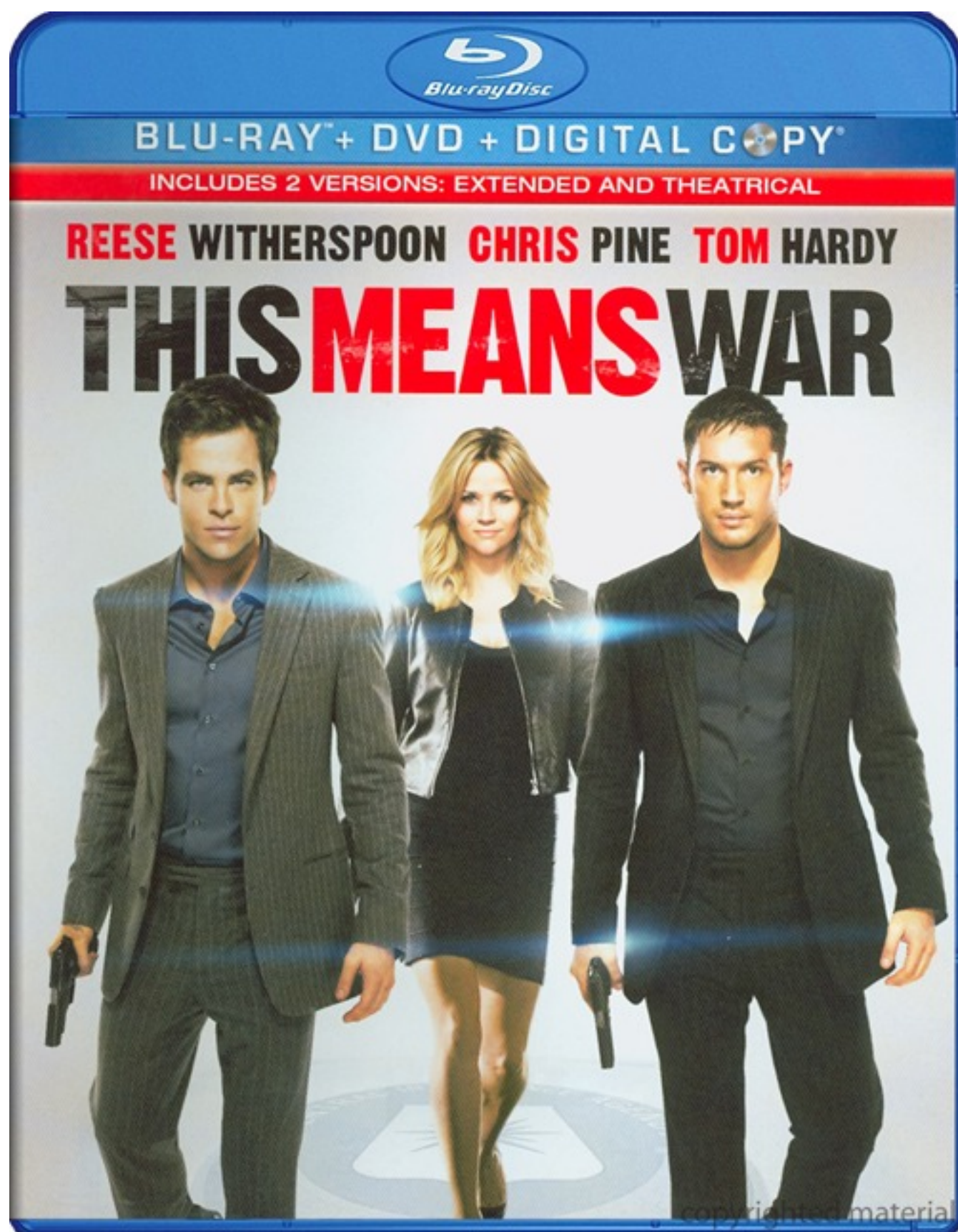
CHICAGO – McG’s “This Means War” could’ve been an interesting comedy if it had actually been about the undeniable love between its two male leads. Not since Lynn Shelton’s “Humpday” has a film so blatantly portrayed the homoerotic tendencies within close male friendships. Yet by denying its own subtext, the film is ultimately as clueless and insufferable as its one-note characters.

FDR (Chris Pine) and Tuck (Tom Hardy) are CIA operatives who fall for the same woman, Lauren (Reese Witherspoon), and resort to all sorts of high tech humiliations to sabotage each other’s romance. Yet neither man’s feelings for Lauren appear to have any semblance of substance. Their competitive spirit mirrors the insecurity of frat boys who boast about the number of women they’ve slept with. FDR and Tuck are so obsessed with each other’s sex lives that it’s clear that they just want to sleep together.



Blu-ray Rating: **1.0/5.0**

Consider an early scene where Tuck asks FDR if he would ever want to have the same feelings for a woman that they have for each other, to which FDR quickly replies, “No.” Later on, during one of several eavesdropping sessions, they overhear Lauren complain that FDR has small hands, a sure indication that he has a small penis. FDR glares at his smirking friend and says, “You KNOW that I don’t.” Even Apatowian bromances never get this hot and heavy. These guys are so desperate to watch one another having sex with Lauren that you keep waiting for the film to devolve into a retread of “Y Tu Mamá También.” Yet that film sported an enormous intelligence about human relationships and the complexities of eroticism. “This Means War” aspires to be little more than a stupid action comedy, complete with the one millionth usage of The Heavy’s “How You Like Me Now?” and a multitude of ugly, mean-spirited riffs from the excruciatingly unfunny Chelsea Handler. Her entire act amounts to: “Men are pigs, so women have every right to be pigs as well.” It’s women like her who deserve men like FDR and Tuck. As Handler rants and raves in the role of Lauren’s obnoxious friend, Witherspoon dithers, frets and mopes to no end. Even in the rare moments when she does something legitimately funny (like awkwardly saying, “Peace!” to her ex-boyfriend) she ruins the moment with the stilted delivery of a needless line (“I want to die right now”). I think it’s time for Witherspoon to officially be placed in the crowded category of Oscar winners whose careers collapsed as soon as they won the gold.



This Means War was released on Blu-ray and DVD on May 22, 2012.

Photo credit: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment

Not once during the entire picture was I unsure of which man Lauren would ultimately choose. Rarely are screenplay formulas this pathetically transparent. Pine gets the majority of the screen time, which may have been partly due to the fact that "Star Trek" made a lot of money. Hardy is a vastly more accomplished and gifted actor, but he's stuck playing second-banana to Pine's vain mugging. I can't remember the last time I liked a leading man less. The plot conceit that Lauren wants to initially date both men is entirely false. After she has a good first date with Tuck, she is aggressively (and inexplicably) pursued by FDR, who forces her to say yes to a date with him. After FDR realizes that Tuck saw her first, he becomes even more adamant in his efforts to claim the woman for himself. Yet Lauren is no prize. Her biggest problem with Tuck is that "he's British," as if that in itself is a deal-breaker.

Lauren's charmless idiocy isn't aided by the inherent idiocy of the screenplay. There's a jaw-dropping scene in a video store where FDR tries to impress her by recommending Alfred Hitchcock's 1938 classic, "The Lady Vanishes." Lauren cuts him down to size by referring to the timeless masterpiece as "second-tier Hitchcock," while claiming that it's inferior to the director's output from 1960 to 1972. The irony here, unbeknownst to the filmmakers, is that these years marked the infamous decline of the Master of Suspense, and included two of his biggest duds, 1966's "Torn Curtain" and 1969's "Topaz." It's clear that "This Means War" knows as much about Hitchcock as it does about men, women and life itself.

"This Means War" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.40:1 aspect ratio), accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks, and includes a Blu-ray, DVD and digital copy of the film. The Blu-ray disc includes the PG-13-rated theatrical cut and the slightly more vulgar unrated version that merely extends the misery by seven minutes. McG offers audio commentary on the extended cut as well as 15 minutes of deleted scenes where he outs himself as a "huge Elmodóvar fan," while recalling a sexist gag that got him in trouble with "the female leadership of the studio." To his credit, McG is freely critical of his work, consistently pointing out elements that could've been improved, but he fails to see any of his overarching flaws. His favorite of the three alternate endings included on the disc is the one where FDR and Tuck end up in each other's arms. That certainly would've been the most honest ending, but it also would've been attached to a dishonest movie.

The worst extras are an "uncensored gag reel" where Handler spouts out gems like, "You know what Tuck rhymes with?" and a truly

appalling bachelorette party sequence that plays like the “Bridesmaids” audition reel from hell, and includes a not-so-special appearance by Whitney Cummings. Viewers without an Internet-connected TV are out of luck if they press “Live Features,” which causes the disc to immediately eject while a message flashes on the screen stating, “This disc cannot be played.” If I had my way, every disc of “This Means War” would automatically eject as soon as viewers pressed “Play,” thus prompting a message that states, “This disc should not be played.”

‘This Means War’ is released by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment and stars Chris Pine, Reese Witherspoon, Tom Hardy, Chelsea Handler and Til Schweiger. It was written by Timothy Dowling and Simon Kinberg and directed by McG. It was released on May 22, 2012. The theatrical cut is rated PG-13.



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