

## Film Review: Judd Apatow's 'This is 40' Clutters Truth with Cliché

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 20, 2012 - 2:12pm

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CHICAGO – Judd Apatow's "This is 40" is a true disappointment, a comedy that purports to say something honest and insightful about approaching middle age in the '10s but blurs truth by smothering it in contrivance and cliché. Strong work from Leslie Mann and Albert Brooks rescue the project from complete disaster but the largely-unfunny and almost entirely disingenuous script mark this as the talented Apatow's most notable misfire.



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

Pete (Paul Rudd) and Debbie (Mann) seem happy enough. Their sex life has waned in recent years as the magic has dissipated due to exhaustion and a bit too much sharing of Pete's ass (whether he's on the toilet playing with his tablet or literally asking his wife to look in his butt for medical problems) but they're good parents, living a good life. "This is 40" is about a troublesome chapter in that good life as problems mount in various departments at the same time. Most married couples have been there. You can handle one problem at a time but when they all pile up simultaneously, it leads to marital stress.



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The first problem seems at first to be built around Debbie's unwillingness to admit she's turning 40. She tells everyone she's 38 and gets caught at the gynecologist having given different years of birth on different forms. The age issue is quickly discarded for more serious issues when Debbie finds out she's pregnant with an unexpected third baby. Her two daughters Sadie & Charlotte (Maude & Iris Apatow, Mann & Apatow's two real-life offspring) are fighting more often and addicted to modern technology as Sadie goes through a bit of online bullying. How can Debbie & Pete handle a third kid? She decides to keep the unplanned pregnancy secret.

Meanwhile, Pete is struggling with his record label, choosing to bet it all on a comeback for aging rocker Graham Parker while his family's finances continue to dwindle. It doesn't help that he's been bankrolling his lay-about father (Albert Brooks), who just had triplets of his own with his new wife. At the same time, Debbie is struggling to reconnect with her distant dad (John Lithgow). Parenthood and the way it impacts all of the decisions we make on both ends (how our parents treated us and how we treat our kids) is a major theme of "This is 40" and seems personal enough to Apatow to be one of the few subplots that work here. Jason Segel and Chris O'Dowd steal scenes as a personal trainer for Debbie and a co-worker of Pete's, respectively, while Megan Fox co-stars as a young, high-spirited worker of Debbie's designed plot-wise to make our heroine feel young again in a predictable bar-hopping scene.



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*"This is 40" stars Leslie Mann, Paul Rudd, Maude Apatow, Iris Apatow, Jason Segel, Chris O'Dowd, Lena Dunham, Annie Mumolo, Robert Smigel, Megan Fox, Charlyne Yi, Albert Brooks, John Lithgow, and Graham Parker. It was written and directed by Judd Apatow. It will be released on December 21, 2012.*



This is 40

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

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