

Film Review: Unoriginal, Unfunny ‘This is Where I Leave You’ a Poor Man’s ‘August: Osage County’

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on September 19, 2014 - 9:02pm

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CHICAGO – Jason Bateman and an all-star cast got me there. The unfunny copycat story left me regretting it. If you don’t start with a solid plot that’s at least somewhat new, it doesn’t matter how many “A”-listers you throw into an ensemble. They’re just individuals doing the best they can with weak material. But the film’s fatal flaw is it can’t figure out who it is – a comedy, drama or dramedy? – and it didn’t do just one thing well.



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

On the surface, the new comedy from director Shawn Levy (“Real Steel,” “The Internship”) and rookie writer and novelist Jonathan Tropper might have seemed promising. Just put the combined talents of Jason Bateman, Tina Fey, Jane Fonda, Rose Byrne, Adam Driver, Timothy Olyphant, Kathryn Hahn, Dax Shepard, Abigail Spencer, Corey Stoll and Connie Britton in the same story and you’ve got a winner, right? Not if they’ve got nothing new to do together.

As it turns out, Tropper just has this group reading from the script of Tracy Letts’ award-winning “August: Osage County” play and screenplay. He neglects to add nearly enough new or different to warrant the carbon copy. The 2013 Tracy Letts film was memorably made by Meryl Streep’s leading role, but even without her gritty veracity, it’s still a league above and beyond Tropper’s recreation.

It’s impossible not to compare this new film to the previous. Likewise, it’s unrealistic not to be disappointed by Jane Fonda’s much less interesting role in place of Meryl Streep’s tour de force. Fonda’s artificially large breasts were perhaps funny the first time the joke was revealed, but the comedy sagged quite quickly after trying to use it a dozen times instead of simply writing a compelling character.



[Read Adam Fendelman’s full review of “This is Where I Leave You”.](#) [21]

The film is redeemed only in its quick wins and sparsely successful decisions. Known from TV’s “Girls,” Adam Driver is a prime example. While comedy legends Jason Bateman and Tina Fey fall flat and instead coast through the film without ever standing out, Driver actually makes me laugh. He’s the quirky screw-up trying to date a sophisticated cougar when you know that’ll never work out.

He too is forced in the film’s central location – a simple house – where a family is unnaturally brought together by their father’s death and mother’s lie. The difference is he’s unpredictable, doesn’t always play it safe and takes his own creative liberties from a lackluster script. Driver even finds time for moments of emotional seriousness wrapped within his otherwise dopey character.

“This is Where I Leave You” stars Jason Bateman, Tina Fey, Jane Fonda, Rose Byrne, Adam Driver, Timothy Olyphant, Kathryn Hahn, Dax Shepard, Abigail Spencer, Corey Stoll and Connie Britton from director Shawn Levy and writer Jonathan Tropper based on the novel by Jonathan Tropper. The film, which opened on Sept. 19, 2014, has a running time of 103 minutes. It is rated “R” for language, sexual content

and some drug use.

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Left to right: Tina Fey, Corey Stoll, Jane Fonda, Jason Bateman and Adam Driver in “This is Where I Leave You”.
Photo credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

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