

Blu-Ray Review: Predictable ‘The Proposal’ Elevated By Fine Cast

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 19, 2009 - 11:26pm

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CHICAGO – Just as “My Best Friend’s Wedding” existed solely to provide Julia Roberts with a career comeback, “The Proposal” aimed to prove that Sandra Bullock still has what it takes to headline a romantic comedy. In that regard, it succeeded admirably.

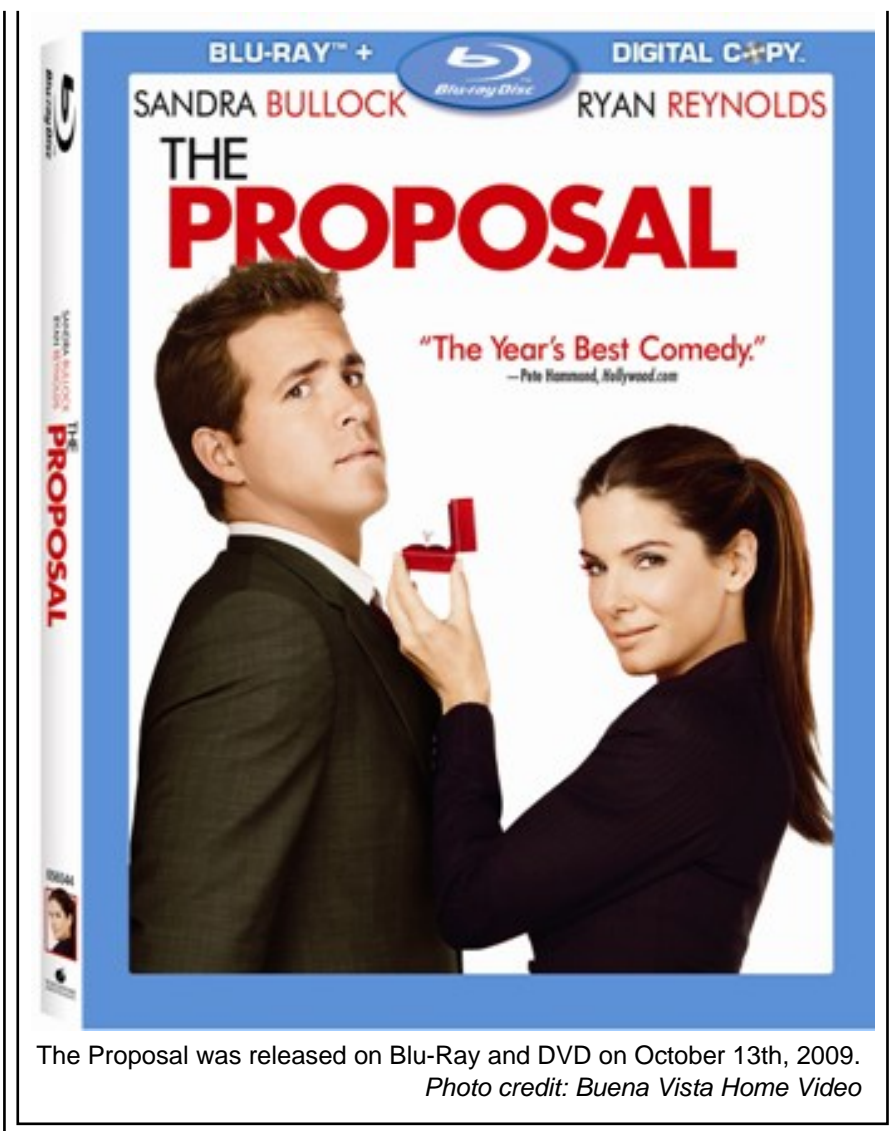


Audiences flocked to it, though Bullock may have lost some returning fans with her other summer release, the disastrous “All About Steve.” What often makes her screen presence so endearing is the earthiness and self-deprecation that brings texture to her good looks. As silly as her “Miss Congeniality” films were, they presented a female protagonist who chose her individuality over the stereotypical feminine qualities that often win trophies at beauty pageants. In “The Proposal,” Bullock plays another woman unwilling to compromise her strong personality...that is, until the plot kicks in.



The Proposal was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on October 13th, 2009.
Photo credit: Buena Vista Home Video

As Margaret, the hard-nosed executive editor-in-chief of a book publishing company, Bullock charges into her office like Meryl Streep in “The Devil Wears Prada,” while her secretary (Ryan Reynolds) gawks and frets like Anne Hathaway. Will this be a subversive “battle of the sexes” comedy with Bullock in the dominant male role, while Reynolds exudes Michael Cera-like vulnerability? Not a chance. Once the Canadian Bullock finds her job threatened by an expired Visa, she forces Reynolds into marrying her. This leads them on an awkward trip to meet his family in Sitka, Alaska, where their relationship develops a familiar “Taming of the Shrew” dynamic.



Peter Chiarelli's screenplay reads like a "Spot That Movie" game for scholars of movie formulas. Bullock's attempts to please Reynolds' eccentric family are blatantly reminiscent of her past hit, "While You Were Sleeping," where she duped similar relatives into thinking she was engaged to a handsome (if comatose) member of their family. Reynolds even has a tart-tongued granny with heart problems, played by Betty White, who's a shameless rip-off of the Glynis Johns character in "Sleeping." Bullock must also endure a series of humiliations on the order of Ben Stiller in "Meet the Parents," including her accidental endangerment of a beloved family pet.

All moviegoers need to do is look at the cast list, and they'll know exactly what to expect: cuddly neuroses from Bullock, deadpan quips from Reynolds, disarmingly blunt zingers from White, maternal beaming from Mary Steenburgen and tough-love lectures from Craig T. Nelson (as Reynolds' parents). These actors are all comfortable in their familiar roles, but they aren't just coasting. Their performances are uniformly strong, and director Anne Fletcher allows them to spark off each other.

Bullock and Reynolds generate real chemistry in their scenes together, particularly when they must improvise the story of their engagement for Reynolds' demanding family. And White earns her belly-laughs with the same sublime comic timing she's mastered over the last half-century. Her best line actually comes in the film's outtakes, when Reynolds suggestively jokes, "One more [take], and then Betty gets it." White, without missing a mischievous beat, says, "I haven't had it in so long."

In the end, "The Proposal" is all about manipulation. Bullock manipulates Reynolds into marrying her, Reynolds manipulates Bullock into promoting him, Reynolds' family manipulates the couple into getting a quickie marriage before granny croaks, and the filmmakers manipulate the audience into thinking any actual love could develop between such cutthroat individuals. Viewers may not buy the plot, but they can easily enjoy the intrinsic pleasure provided by such harmless escapism.

"The Proposal" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), which brings the images a spectacular clarity that fails to obscure the fake Alaskan backgrounds superimposed on green screen (much of the film was shot in Massachusetts). It is accompanied by English, French and Spanish audio tracks, and includes an additional disk containing the film's digital copy. Special features include back-slapping commentary from Fletcher and Chiarelli, brief deleted scenes and outtakes, and an even more formulaic alternate ending.

'The Proposal' is released by Touchstone Home Entertainment and it stars Sandra Bullock, Ryan Reynolds, Betty White, Mary Steenburgen and Craig T. Nelson. It was written by Peter Chiarelli and directed by Anne Fletcher. It was released on October 13th, 2009. It is rated PG-13.

By MATT FAGERHOLM
Staff Writer
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com)

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