

## Blu-Ray Review: 'Extract' Aims Satire at Land of Idiocracy

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CHICAGO – Mike Judge is fascinated by the culture of stupid. His characters are so desperate to shake up the listless patterns of their lives that they'll resort to antics far below their normal IQ level. Judge's third live-action feature is aimed at a generation addicted to smoking pot and watching "Family Guy," two compulsions often used as an easy escape route from reality.

Joel (Jason Bateman) is dissatisfied with his life at work and at home. All of his problems stem from either boredom or frustration. His wife (Kristen Wiig) is tired of her job designing advertisements on her home computer, and doesn't respond to her husband's bedroom advances. Joel's job as owner of an extract manufacturing plant is in turmoil when an on-the-job accident (brought about irked employees) badly injures one of his workers, whose lawsuit attracts the attention of a gold-digging con artist, Cindy (Mila Kunis).



Blu-Ray Rating: **3.0/5.0**

Since his star-making role in "Arrested Development," Bateman has mastered the art of remaining straight-faced and sane while treading water in a sea of morons. His deadpan comic timing keeps Judge's film grounded during its most looney passages, most of which are kick-started by Joel's ill-advised friendship with bartender Dean (Ben Affleck). When Joel becomes smitten with Cindy (posing as a temp), he seeks Dean's advice, while under the influence of a horse tranquilizer. The next morning, a sober and horrified Joel finds himself paying a gigolo to sleep with his wife, in order to erase his guilt for pursuing Cindy.

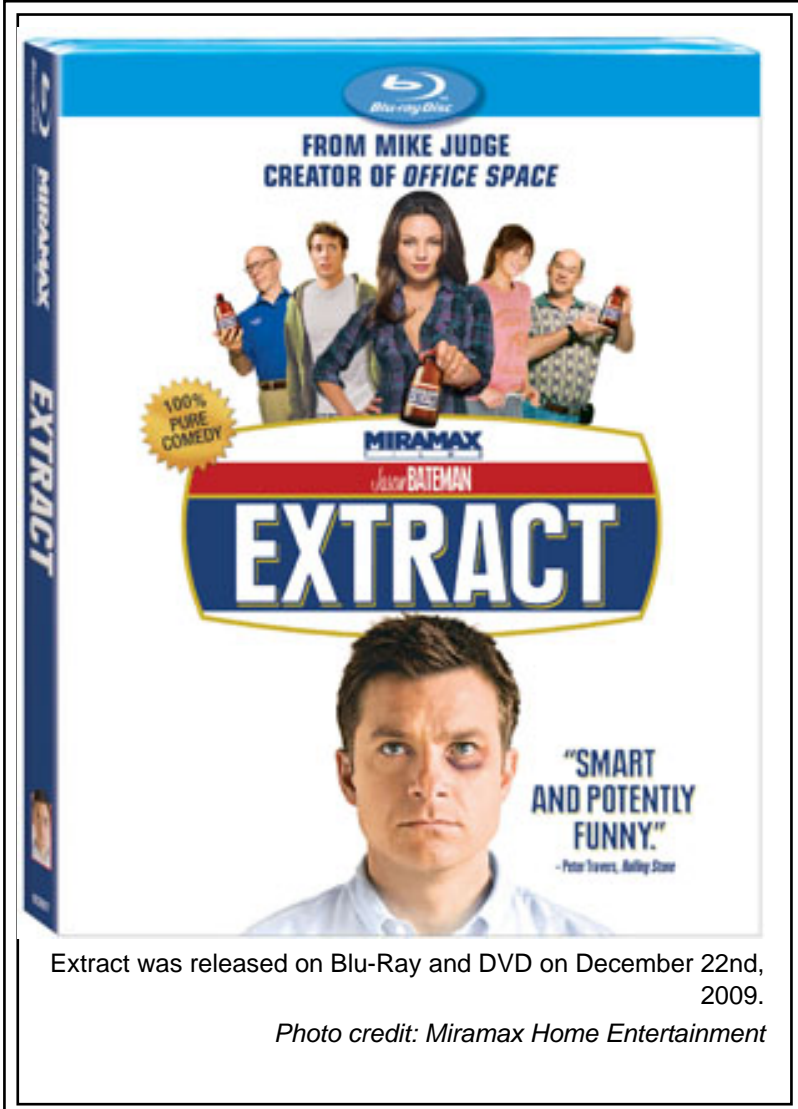


Jason Bateman stars in Mike Judge's Extract.

Photo credit: Miramax Home Entertainment

The comic complications stack up in a perfectly entertaining fashion, though "Extract" is a considerably minor work compared to the more resonant satire in "Office Space." There's no sequence here to compare with the savage beating of a fax machine in Judge's decade-old

classic, which still stands as a quintessential portrait of white collar rage. Yet the blue collar workers in "Extract" are often as clueless and hateful as their bosses, which thus makes for a considerably darker picture. There's even a local eccentric (played by a painfully believable David Koechner) who is as tone deaf to social cues as "Office Space"'s Milton. Yet instead of emerging as the film's unlikely hero, he suffers a rather mean-spirited fate.



Like Judge's previous two features, "Extract" failed to connect with audiences during its initial run. Will it follow in the footsteps of "Office Space" and "Idiocracy," eventually becoming a cult favorite on Blu-ray and DVD? It's hard to say. Judge has made a smart film about stupid people, but he ultimately loses his nerve in pushing the film further into the waters of unapologetic dark comedy. The innate dumbness of his characters give them a childlike sweetness that softens the blow brought about by their offensive acts. This is especially true in the subplot involving the gigolo (Dustin Milligan) who knows everything about sex, but would be hard-pressed to spell it.

There's plenty of laughs to be had, but they come in fits and starts. In the film's making-of featurette, Judge refers to Wiig as a "female Peter Sellers," which is a spot-on comparison, though it's a shame that he gave her such a thankless role. Many of the film's best lines are given to Affleck, who delivers them with amusing conviction, such as when he tries to convince Joel that Xanax is good for all psychological problems. Kunis's character is the most problematic. Her crucial encounter with Bateman, late in the film, leads to an unconvincing resolution that provides the film with an upbeat ending loaded with artificial sweeteners.

"Extract" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 1.85:1 aspect ratio), and accompanied by English and French audio tracks. The scant extras include six minutes of deleted footage, which mainly serve as a showcase for Affleck's alternate riffs. A ten-minute making-of featurette offers little insight into the creative mind of Mike Judge, though it does include footage of the filmmaker directing himself in an uncredited cameo. He's easy to spot, since his voice sounds suspiciously like Hank Hill.

*'Extract' is released by Miramax Home Entertainment and stars Jason Bateman, Mila Kunis, Kristen Wiig, J.K. Simmons, Clifton Collins Jr., Dustin Milligan, David Koechner, Beth Grant and Ben Affleck. It was written and directed by Mike Judge. It was released on December 22nd, 2009. It is rated R.*



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