

Adam Sandler, Kevin James Act Like Children in ‘Grown Ups’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 25, 2010 - 10:56am

- [Adam Sandler](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Chris Rock](#) [4]
- [David Spade](#) [5]
- [Dennis Dugan](#) [6]
- [Ebony Jo-Ann](#) [7]
- [Fred Wolf](#) [8]
- [Grown Ups](#) [9]
- [Joyce Van Patten](#) [10]
- [Kevin James](#) [11]
- [Maria Bello](#) [12]
- [Maya Rudolph](#) [13]
- [Movie Review](#) [14]
- [Rob Schneider](#) [15]
- [Salma Hayek](#) [16]



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – It may be called “Grown Ups,” but too much of the new Adam Sandler ensemble comedy feels like it was written by an eight-year-old boy. The believable friendship chemistry that Sandler has with co-stars Kevin James, Chris Rock, David Spade, and Rob Schneider significantly ups the entertainment value, but “Grown Ups” could have and should have been much better.

Co-written by Sandler with Fred Wolf (“Joe Dirt”), “Grown Ups” is a cliched variation on “The Big Chill” with a quintet of friends from childhood reuniting after the death of the coach who long ago guided them to a basketball championship. It hits all of the beats that you would expect it to while being often genially entertaining by virtue of the fun that these friends in real life must have had in making it. Sadly, the elements that actually work are off-set by gross-out jokes, false sentimentality, or bits that fall to the floor with an embarrassing thud. There may be more laughs than your average Sandler comedy but the growth of the overall piece is still stunted.



Kurt McKenzie (Chris Rock), Marcus Higgins (David Spade), Eric Lamonsoff (Kevin James), Lenny Feder (Adam Sandler) and Rob Hilliard (Rob Schneider).

Photo credit: Sony Pictures/Tracy Bennett

Sandler plays Lenny Feder, a bigwig agent called “Mr. Hollywood” by his friends who comes to the funeral “reunion” with his spoiled kids, cute nanny, and high maintenance wife (Salma Hayek). At the funeral, Lenny reunites with Eric Lamonsoff (Kevin James), Kurt McKenzie (Chris Rock), Marcus Higgins (David Spade), and Rob Hilliard (Rob Schneider). Of course, most of them come with spouses, offspring, and subplots.

James’s Eric is pretty much just there for fat guy jokes and physical humor but he also comes with a wife (Maria Bello) who still breastfeeds their four-year-old son. Kurt’s wife (Maya Rudolph) may be pregnant but she wears the pants in the family as both she and her abrasive mother (Ebony Jo-Ann) ridicule the stay-at-home father. Marcus is the player, the one who comes unattached enough to hit on Rob’s unnaturally hot daughters. Finally, the overly sensitive Rob is the brunt of most of the gang’s jokes, not just for his hippie nature but for the fact that his wife (Joyce Van Patten) is a few decades older. Other regular Sandler collaborators including Colin Quinn, Steve Buscemi, and a nearly movie-stealing Tim Meadows pop up in small roles.



Lenny Feder (Adam Sandler), Kurt McKenzie (Chris Rock) and Eric Lamonsoff (Kevin James).

Photo credit: Sony Pictures/Tracy Bennett

“Grown Ups” actually works best when it doesn’t focus on plot at all. None of these actors and certainly not director Dennis Dugan excel at actual storytelling. What I mean is that the scenes in which the cast gets to sit around a beautiful lake setting and rip on each other in the way friends sometimes do have an easy-going charm that’s missing from the forced humor of the rest of the piece. The “guys hanging out” scenes are where Sandler and his buddies come to life and they have a believable humor that feels organic. You can tell these five guys are actually friends and the importance of that shouldn’t be understated. You also could do a lot worse than having actors as extremely talented as Bello, Hayek, and Rudolph in your supporting cast.

Sadly, all three of these excellent actors are subjected to a stupid gross-out joke at one point or another. Every time “Grown Ups” threatens to maintain its believable rhythm for more than a few scenes, there’s a sequence such as the one where Maya Rudolph actually gets sprayed in the face with breast milk to remind the viewer they’re watching a dumb comedy; emphasis on the dumb.



Rob (Rob Schneider), Marcus (David Spade), Eric (Kevin James), Kurt (Chris Rock) and Lenny (Adam Sandler).

Photo credit: Sony Pictures/Tracy Bennett

Worst of all is Dugan's leaden direction that would get him fired from most sitcoms. The fact is that the man has no sense of comic pacing, allowing some bits to go on ridiculously past their expiration date and hurrying some of the scenes that are actually funny. When Dugan, Sandler, and Wolf realized they had no emotional arc to get them to a climax, they shot a scene in which all the characters get random, out-of-nowhere emotional revelations like the fact that one of them is broke and another apparently can't even talk to a pretty girl without being accused of straying. It's a ridiculous scene that could almost play as a satire of such stupid moments but I don't Dugan thinks he's directing a spoof. Just a bad comedy.

Adam Sandler continues to fascinate me as an actor. When he strays from his lowest common denominator material and makes films like "Punch-Drunk Love," "Spanglish," and "Funny People," he proves that he can bring realistic characters to life. But most of his fans don't see those movies, so he's forced to go back to Dugan, the director of "Big Daddy," "You Don't Mess With the Zohan," "I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry," and more crimes against cinema.

For arguably the first time, it feels like Sandler tried to bring a bit of the realistic characters he learned how to play in his less mainstream films to a big summer project for mass audiences instead of playing over-the-top characters like in "Zohan," but he was held back by a co-writer and director who probably still laugh every time they call him Billy Madison. He may be growing up but the people he works with have most certainly not.

"Grown Ups" stars Adam Sandler, Kevin James, Chris Rock, David Spade, Rob Schneider, Salma Hayek, Maria Bello, Maya Rudolph, Joyce Van Patten, and Ebony Jo-Ann. It was written by Sandler & Fred Wolf and directed by Dennis Dugan. It is rated PG-13.



[17]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [18]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [17]

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 24 2024 - 6:26pm):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/11108/adam-sandler-kevin-james-act-like-children-in-grown-ups>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/adam-sandler>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/chris-rock>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/david-spade>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/dennis-dugan>

- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ebony-jo-ann>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/fred-wolf>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/grown-ups>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/joyce-van-patten>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/kevin-james>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/maria-bello>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/maya-rudolph>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/rob-schneider>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/salma-hayek>
- [17] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>