

## Vanessa Hudgens, Alex Pettyfer Wallow in Aptly Titled ‘Beastly’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 4, 2011 - 1:44pm

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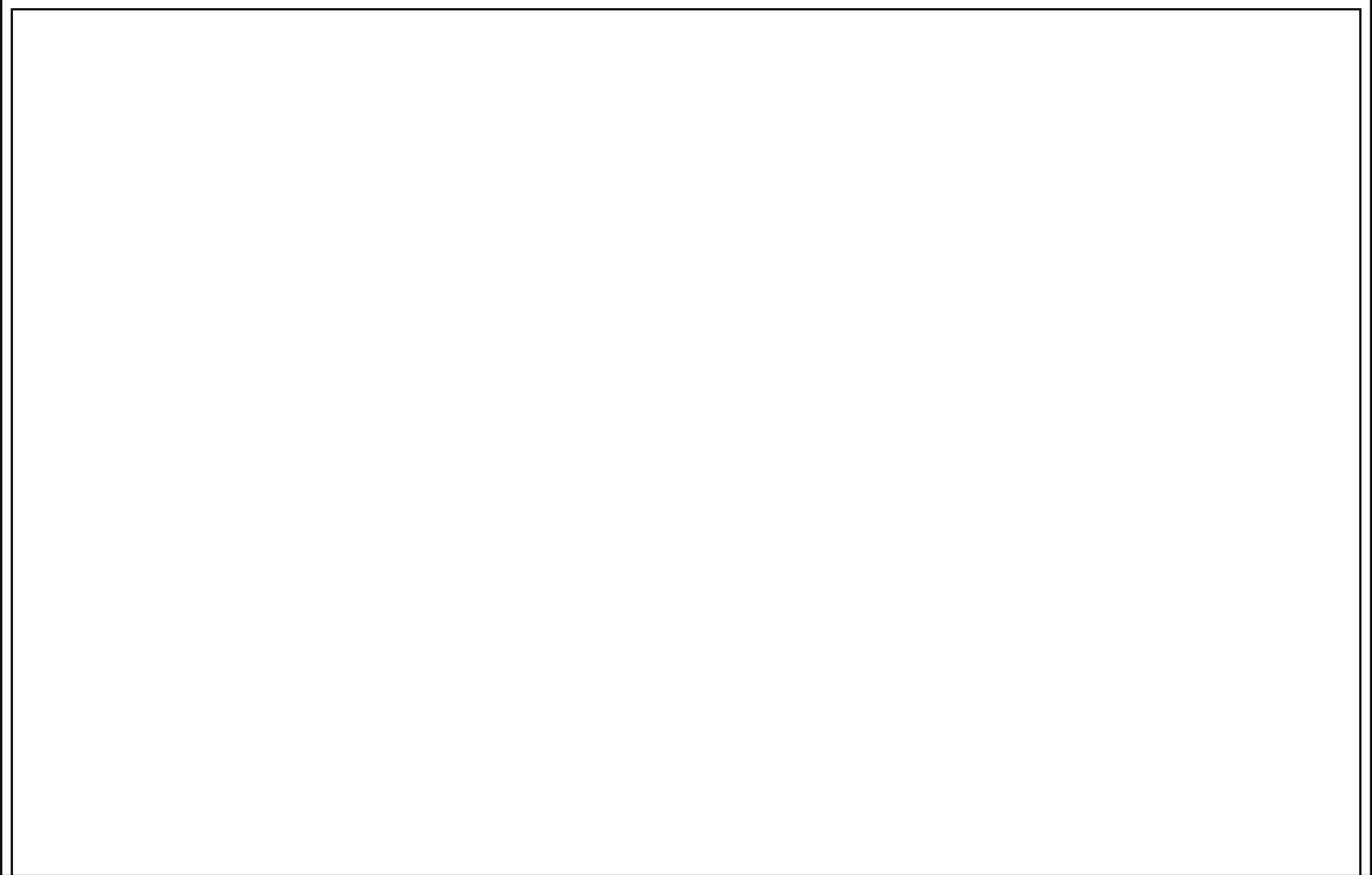
Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The main problem with “Beastly,” a modern high schooler retelling of “Beauty and the Beast,” is that the outcome is known (Beast will learn lessons, become handsome again). That leaves only the way it gets to that end for creating story. This film cannot find its way.

The script is absurd and doesn’t do any favors for the desperate-to-please cast. Stupid situations, cruel dialogue and overreaction to perceived slights are some of the sins, but mostly the story and circumstance is beastly dull.

Kyle (Alex Pettyfer) is the big man on campus, a rich kids’ New York City high school (complete with multi-media screens in the hallways). He has the perfect life, handsome, wealthy and disdainful of anyone who isn’t in that realm. He is running for something called Green President, just to get it on his resume for college. During his campaign he meets an admirer named Lindy (Vanessa Hudgens) and comes across a teenage witch named Sabrina....er Kendra (Mary-Kate Olsen). Kendra tells the truth at him, and he repays her by standing her up at a school function. Cue the evil spell of the witch.

Handsome Kyle transforms into Beastly Punk Rocker. He’s ugly but not too ugly. After a lame attempt at plastic surgery (why no investigation into the black magic?), Kyle harshly accepts his fate, which can only be reversed by having someone sincerely say ‘I love you’ to his beast self. His vain, image-oriented father (a paycheck collecting Peter Krause) procures a remote NYC pad for him, banishing him to a self-contained kingdom. He even gets the Beast a private tutor named Will (Neil Patrick Harris), who is literally blind, so better to understand the true inner nature of Kyle’s being.

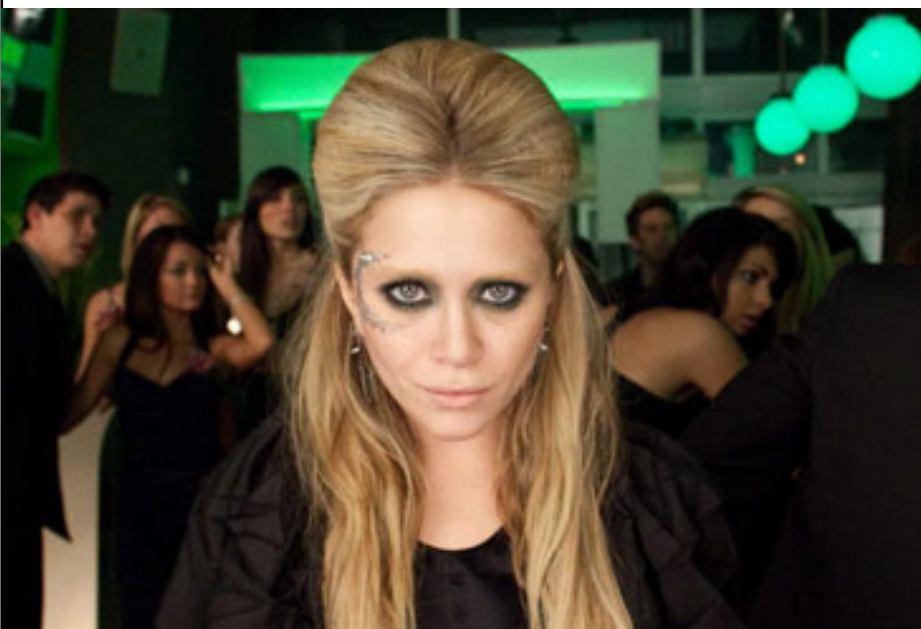




Bullseyed: Neil Patrick Harris is Will the Tutor in 'Beastly'  
Photo credit: © CBS Films

It is Lindy that still holds sway for the Beast, and he begins a campaign to woo her, or in his case stalk her. After some unlikely circumstances, Lindy moves in with the Kyle's new family, housekeeper Zola (Lisa Gay Hamilton), Will and his Beastly self. Can he find the true love to break the spell? What, you've never heard of this story before?

The production didn't want to make Kyle too "beastly," for starters. He's no looker, but it was interesting that the production design's concept of beast-like was that of a tattooed punk rocker. Besides the oozing sores on his face, I doubt he would get a second glance in New York City, and there have been prime examples of "sexy ugly" in rock and roll, and those guys seem to do all right with the ladies.



Mary Kate Olsen as Kendra the Witch in 'Beastly'  
Photo credit: CBS Films

It's also hard to imagine that Kyle's handsome BMOC would be so popular with his utterly cruel persona. And yes, he tricked the teenage witch into standing her up at a dance, but is that grounds for turning him into a beast? There is a problem with realistic expectations and motivations all over this story, anchored by wooden performances of dull characters.

The supporting cast bleeds the script dry, and still it doesn't sell. Neil Patrick Harris, as the blind tutor, seems a last second add-on. The writer/director (Daniel Barnz) probably re-wrote to role to reflect Harris's smarmy-but-charming sitcom personality. It lands like a lead balloon in this story, but at least the Harris character stays out of the way. Vanessa Hudgens does have screen presence, but her damsel in distress is bizarrely drawn, and the narrative performs logic gymnastics to get her in proximity to the Beast. Only Mary-Kate Olsen as the teenage witch felt comfortably cast. I have suspected that the Olsen twins were witches all along.

And then there were the acting chops of Kyle the Beast, Alex Pettyfer. He never seemed comfortable in the role, maybe that's the point, because he was precisely like a handsome guy trying to play a troll. He simply can't understand it. Plus his actions toward his true love were creepy and stalker-like. Is a 100 page letter written to someone romantic or insane? It came off insane.





Relatable? Alex Pettyfer (Kyle the Beast) and Vanessa Hudgens (Lindy) in 'Beastly'  
Photo credit: © CBS Films

This is apparently based on a novel, geared to the young adult "Twilight" saga crowd. All the ancient monsters like vampires, werewolves and beasts are becoming best seller primed for text messaging, set-in-high-school reworks. Next on the docket, "Firebreath, Confessions of a Teenage Dragon."

I kid. Take your best date to this obvious romantically challenged movie and get lessons on how not to capture the lover of your dreams. Anything the beast will do, most assuredly anybody can do better.

*"Beastly" opens everywhere March 4th. Featuring Alex Pettyfer, Vanessa Hudgens, Mary-Kate Olsen, Peter Krause and Neil Patrick Harris. Written and directed by Daniel Barnz. Rated "PG-13"*



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