

## ‘Happythankyoumoreplease’ Falls Flat With Unlikable Characters

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 11, 2011 - 5:00pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Josh Radnor’s “Happythankyoumoreplease” wants to be a new-generation Woody Allen film but misses the mark wildly by presenting characters that aren’t likable in situations that aren’t believable. None of the relationships that drive this awkward dramedy ring true and only a few supporting performances make the effort worthwhile as they highlight the weaknesses at the core of the manipulative script.

Radnor, known for playing Ted on CBS’s “How I Met Your Mother,” wrote, directed, and stars in a piece so blatantly shooting for memories of “Annie Hall” and “Manhattan” that it features a character literally discussing the career of Woody Allen in case it wasn’t clear enough. Radnor plays Sam Wexler, a very-slight variation on his Ted character in that he’s a creative guy who can’t quite get his sh\*t together romantically or professionally. The film opens with him waking up late for an important interview and taking in a foster kid that he thinks was abandoned on a subway train.



Happythankyoumoreplease

*Photo credit: Hannover House*

As Sam tries to figure out what to do with the charming urchin now attached to him, he crosses paths with the beautiful Mississippi (a movie-stealing Kate Mara) and the two decide to have a three-night stand instead of a one-night one. Can they overcome their bad dating patterns to stick together? What will Sam do with the foster kid he grows to love?

Meanwhile, “Happythankyoumoreplease” follows two other relationship tracks that are related to Sam’s. His good friend Annie (Malin Akerman) has been unlucky in love and finds herself practically stalked by a co-worker named Sam #2 (Tony Hale) who has clearly fallen head over heels for her. Sam’s cousin Mary Catherine (Zoe Kazan) has her own issues as her man Charlie (Pablo Schreiber) wants to move from NYC to Los Angeles, something that she desperately wants to avoid.

“Happythankyoumoreplease” suffers from several problems but none is more prominent than an unlikable lead. Radnor has tried to present Sam as an “average guy,” one who doesn’t need to be liked or hated by the audience, but he’s not a strong enough writer or actor for something that delicate. Sam needs to be likable. Instead, he comes off like someone who completely doesn’t deserve Mara’s delightful Mississippi. It’s impossible for a plot like theirs to work when the viewer is constantly thinking “she could do better.” And I hated how Radnor the writer reduced men and women to such basics as when Mississippi says she needs Sam to be nice and he says that he needs her to be

naked. That's the reductive, "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus" sitcom-level writing that sinks a piece like this by reducing the battle of the sexes to stereotypes.



Happythankyoumoreplease

Photo credit: Hannover House

As for the other two arcs, they're just as difficult to care about. Tony Hale, cast against type, does the strongest work in the piece, especially in a late scene in which he gets a monologue that's sure to melt a heart or two. He's actually quite good and he and Mara nearly save the piece. The problem is that they're supporting characters. When your supporting cast (Mara, Hale) is much-more-interesting than your leads (Radnor, Akerman), that's a pretty serious problem. As for Kazan and Schreiber, I particularly like her in everything she's done to date but their arc is woefully underdeveloped. I never cared.

And that's the main problem with the film overall — lack of audience investment in the characters or their fates. The dialogue doesn't ring true — an exchange in which Sam suggests that both he and his new girlfriend are a "mess" and they should clean each other up made me particularly nauseous — and the characters aren't likable. No thanks.

*"Happythankyoumoreplease" stars Josh Radnor, Kate Mara, Malin Akerman, Tony Hale, Zoe Kazan, and Pablo Schreiber. It was written and directed by Radnor. It is rated R and was released in Chicago on March 11th, 2011.*



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