

Shallow, Garish 'New Year's Eve' Ruins Your Holiday

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 9, 2011 - 10:51am

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “New Year’s Eve” is so garish and manipulative that it doesn’t really qualify as a film – it’s a product, no more an actual movie than a Hallmark card is a piece of poetry. It is corporate junk at its worst, so shallow that it’s almost remarkably thin, as if director Garry Marshall were trying to win a contest for lack of subtlety. Even the typical tropes of the genre can’t be successfully accomplished in that the bare minimum of romantic energy isn’t even achieved in half of its dozen or so subplots. A few less loathsome characters than “Valentine’s Day” make it a notch better but only because it’s so boring it’s not as easy to get infuriated.

Even more cluttered with characters than the last Marshall holiday movie, “New Year’s Eve” does have a couple of subplots that feature the bare minimum of entertainment that one wonders if they couldn’t have been extended into their own feature. However, without exception, every single storyline in “New Year’s Eve” is so easily summarized in one sentence that their impact in this feature is non-existent. “Dying man and his nurse.” “Two beautiful people stuck in an elevator.” “The singer and the girl who got away.” It’s like a game in which the writers struggled to see how many clichés they could squeeze in one movie. And we all lost.



New Year's Eve

Photo credit: WB

Where do we begin to recap the plot? Of course, everything takes place on the titular date and many of the plotlines circle around the ball dropping in Times Square. Claire Morgan (Hilary Swank) is in charge of making sure the internationally-watched event goes off without a hitch. Of course, the ball gets stuck halfway up and poor Claire has to fret and panic while they try to fix it. Lucky for her, she's got a supportive NYPD friend (Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges) to cock his head and nod reassuringly.

One of the most famous singers in the world, Jensen (Jon Bon Jovi), is scheduled to perform at both a party early in the evening and then in Times Square later. But Jensen has romantic drama in that the head chef for the party happens to be Laura (Katherine Heigl), a woman to whom he proposed and then, with no explanation other than this, ran away. Now he's back, realizing the error of his ways while Laura tries to get over her understandable hatred of him and Ava (Sofia Vergara) pops by for goofy comic relief.

Jensen's insanely-talented back-up singer, Elise (Lea Michele), happens to live in the same building as the holiday-cynical Randy (Ashton Kutcher). The two get stuck in an elevator early in the day and flirt, draw, and sing their way to romance in one of the thinner plotlines of the movie. Equally thin is a nauseating arc in which Jessica Biel and Seth Meyers try to time the birth of their first child in order to win a cash prize for the first newborn of the new year.



New Year's Eve

Photo credit: WB

Oh, we're not even close to done. There's the dying man (Robert De Niro) who needs his kindly nurse (Halle Berry) to help him see the ball drop from the roof of the hospital one last time. There's the mother (Sarah Jessica Parker) concerned about her adolescent daughter (Abigail Breslin) entering the dating world by wanting to kiss a cute boy in Times Square. There's the personality-free guy (Josh Duhamel) racing to New York to meet a girl he encountered a year ago and promised to find 365 days later (of course, the mystery being which one of our heroines is the girl in question). And, finally, and actually most effectively, there's the wallflower (Michelle Pfeiffer) brought out of her shell by her list of New Year's resolutions and the hyperactive bike messenger (Zac Efron) who helps them come true. Don't even ask how Jim Belushi, Carla Gugino, Common, Cary Elwes, Hector Elizondo, Alyssa Milano, and, of course, Larry Miller get involved. Seriously. Don't ask.

To call "New Year's Eve" shallow would be an understatement. You've seen Lexus commercials with more character depth this season. Every possible time you might be engaged by a plot arc or wonder if it could be expanded into its own movie, Marshall moves on to something else. It's a like a Whitman's sampler of clichés. The movie is so cluttered and overcrowded that it becomes somewhat numbing. I stopped being angry at it and started actually marveling at the gall of the corporate machine in front of me. "Valentines' Day" made a mint and the people behind it watered down the frothy formula and trotted it out again. Don't let it happen a third time. I don't think I'll survive "Memorial Day."

"New Year's Eve" stars Hilary Swank, Jon Bon Jovi, Katherine Heigl, Lea Michele, Ashton Kutcher, Halle Berry, Robert De Niro, Sarah Jessica Parker, Abigail Breslin, Josh Duhamel, Michelle Pfeiffer, Zac Efron, Cary Elwes, Sofia Vergara, Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges, Carla Gugino, Seth Meyers, and Jessica Biel. It was written by Katherine Fugate and directed by Garry Marshall. It opens on December 9th, 2011.

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