

‘This Means War’ With Reese Witherspoon is an Attack on Movie Decency

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 17, 2012 - 9:12am

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – McG’s “This Means War” with Chris Pine, Tom Hardy, and Reese Witherspoon is an aggressively annoying movie. It isn’t just bad. It grates. It frustrates. It baffles with its incompetence. The charm of the cast helps off-set the complete failure of the horrendous script and the lackluster eye of its director, but it’s not enough. This isn’t just another romantic comedy that’s neither funny nor romantic it’s almost the direct opposite of those qualities. It’s anti-humor, anti-romance, and anti-movies.

Lauren (Reese Witherspoon) is having trouble meeting the right guy and so her sister Trish (Chelsea Handler) puts up an online profile for her in the hope of catching the right guy. As has never happened in the history of online dating services, Lauren strikes gold on her first date with an online paramour, the sweet, engaging, kind Tuck (Tom Hardy). Moments later, she’s in a video store in some magical land where those still exist and she runs into FDR (Chris Pine) while both are reaching for a copy of the Kiefer Sutherland remake of “The Vanishing” in perhaps the most bizarre choice of movie placement in history. After some horrendous banter about Alfred Hitchcock’s “The Lady Vanishes” is intended to pass as flirtation, she begins a tentative relationship with the polar opposite of Tuck as this dreamy new guy is the clear player, someone who’s not really looking for love...but may just find it anyway.



This Means War

Photo credit: Fox

Of course, the well-advertised twist is that not only are Tuck and FDR friends but they’re also CIA agents. They work across from each other

under the guidance of a superior named Collins (Angela Bassett, sleepwalking through a paycheck role like never before) and have been targeted for death by an international villain named Heinrich (Til Schweiger). When FDR and Tuck find out that they're both wooing the same girl, they begin a bit of not-so-friendly competition for her heart (although why she's special enough to merit such attention is woefully never made clear). Will she go for the sweet single father or the aggressive player? Using CIA technology to spy on her each and every action, the boys try to constantly one-up each other, starting by learning Lauren's tastes and progressing quickly to date sabotage that goes as far as a tranquilizer dart. Of course, it all culminates in revelations and a freeway showdown with Heinrich.

"This Means War" is LAZY. The script by the awful Timothy Dowling (who wrote the worst film of 2011, "Just Go With It") and the supremely-untalented Simon Kinberg (who wrote "xXx: State of the Union" and "X-Men: The Last Stand" among other crimes) barely tries anything beyond the description above. I kept waiting for any sort of surprise. A left turn in the plot, a development that felt organic instead of written, a SINGLE LINE that sounded clever. "This Means War" is shockingly un-funny. It's a film that sounds written and produced by people who haven't been in the real world in decades – as if the Kardashians tried to make a romantic comedy. And every time Chelsea Handler opened her mouth, I started rooting more and more for Heinrich to not just wipe out all of the characters but Los Angeles entirely so as not to produce any more Chelsea Handlers.



This Means War

Photo credit: Fox

The characters in "This Means War" SO rarely do anything that feels genuine. The people below Tuck and FDR at the CIA rarely question why they're not paying attention to the madman out to get them instead of focusing on a semi-attractive marketing specialist. And, most bafflingly, the guys never seem to question what they're doing to each other or the privacy of the woman with which they are supposedly falling in love. When Tuck hears via wire tap that Lauren thinks he's too sweet, he doesn't consider what he's doing is totally gross. Instead, he takes her paintballing and attacks a bunch of children. That wins over any gal, right? When one applies an OUNCE of logic to any of the humor set-ups in "This Means War," they fall apart. So none of the comedy resonates and none of the romance matters.

There are romantic comedies that aren't effective and then there's a tier of awful below that into which "This Means War" almost falls. Almost...ONLY because of the talent of the three leads. If McG cast less-talented stars like Ashton Kutcher or Katherine Heigl in the same script with the same shot choices and the same bizarrely outdated music choices, this would be one of the worst films of the last few years. The script and McG's dull directing decisions are that bad. However, it is impossible to completely dull the screen charisma of Pine, Hardy, and, to a lesser degree, Witherspoon. The guys are convincing in the action scenes and engaging in a few of their scenes together (although neither has an OUNCE of chemistry with Witherspoon...they have more chemistry with each other). It gets to the point where one starts feeling bad for the actors because they deserved better than Lauren, better than this script, and better than McG. They probably signed on to what they expected would be a high-paced romantic comedy with some great action on top. They ended up in what will be one of the most disliked films of 2012. They should declare war on their agents.

"This Means War" stars Chris Pine, Tom Hardy, Reese Witherspoon, Chelsea Handler, Angela Bassett, and Til Schweiger. It was written by Timothy Dowling and Simon Kinberg and directed by McG. It opens on February 17th, 2012 and is rated PG-13.

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