

Strong Ensemble Carries Funny ‘Think Like a Man’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 20, 2012 - 12:56pm

- [Brian Tallerico](#) [2]
- [Gabrielle Union](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [Jerry Ferrara](#) [5]
- [Kevin Hart](#) [6]
- [Meagan Good](#) [7]
- [Michael Ealy](#) [8]
- [Movie Review](#) [9]
- [Regina Hall](#) [10]
- [Romany Malco](#) [11]
- [Taraji P. Henson](#) [12]
- [Terrence J](#) [13]
- [Think Like a Man](#) [14]
- [Tim Story](#) [15]



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Tim Story’s ‘Think Like a Man’ can be a frustrating film but the overall likeability of the cast and the inclusion of some of the often-missing elements from relationship movies (like chemistry and believable friendship dynamics) overcome the movie’s flaws. It’s a movie that could have been better but works on its own terms – it’s funny, clever, and even sweet. It’s not going to change the romantic comedy landscape but so many films in this slumping genre fail spectacularly and no one can say that about “Think Like a Man.”

Based on Steve Harvey’s hit book “Act Like a Woman, Think Like a Man,” this is yet another film about the battle of the sexes in relationships but it doesn’t minimize or demonize either side like so many of these movies typically do. There have been dozens of male-driven raunchy comedies that turn women into the enemy or, worse, the idiot. And there have been “chick flicks” that make men out to be villains or total morons. “Think Like a Man” respects both sides as it tries to illuminate the differences between the sexes without reducing them for the lowest common denominator.



Think Like a Man

Photo credit: Screen Gems

Harvey appears as himself, often dispensing bits of relationship advice from his book, first via an in-movie appearance on a talk show and later in some truly bizarre straight-to-camera bits that should have been cut. Harvey’s appearance selling his book inspires a group of women to change the way they’ve been playing the game and, wouldn’t you know it, the entire group happens to be in or about to enter relationships with a group of male friends. In Steve Harvey’s world, every woman on Earth read his book and put his advice into play.

The men at the center of “Think Like a Man” are a group of friends who have a regular basketball game together and often retire to the same bar for drinks – loudmouth Cedric (a hysterical Kevin Hart), earnest dreamer Dominic (Michael Ealy), man-child Jeremy (Jerry Ferrara), mama’s boy Michael (Terrence J), player Zeke (Romany Malco), and comic relief Bennett (Gary Owen). Four of the guys will encounter relationship issues guided by the all-seeing advice of Steve Harvey. The player meets the beautiful Mya (Meagan Good), a girl who’s tired of cheap sexual encounters and is going to make him wait to “get the cookie.” The guy who values his “Lord of the Rings” toys more than his resume finds his world shattered when his girlfriend Kristen (Gabrielle Union) decides it’s time for him to grown up. The mama’s boy meets a single mother (Regina Hall) who might get him to finally cut the ties to home. Finally, the broke dreamer pretends to be something he’s not to get the confident Lauren (Taraji P. Henson).



Think Like a Man

Photo credit: Screen Gems

If it sounds like a lot of movie for one relationship comedy, you’re not wrong. “Think Like a Man” can get awfully cluttered with subplots and some work better than others but all of them help drag the film out to over two hours. There should never be a Steve Harvey comedy that’s over two hours. You can feel the length and there are obvious edits that Tim Story should have made. Cut out most of the Harvey bits – the movie shows us his “advice,” we don’t need to hear him read from his book – and tighten up each of the subplots by 5-10 minutes and you would have a MUCH stronger, 100-minute movie.

Despite its length, there are definitely things to like here. First off, the cast is remarkably charming and charismatic, something that’s actually less common in relationship comedies than you might think. One of the basic problems of the modern rom-com is that the characters are typically so unlikable that you’d rather see them get run over by a bus than fall in love (see most Kate Hudson and Katherine Heigl movies for reference). The characters in “Think Like a Man” are easy to root for, easy to spend time, and easy to like. That goes a long way. Particular credit goes to Malco, Hart, Ealy, Henson, and Good – they carry the movie enough to make some of the less-interesting performances and subplots (the mama’s boy stuff is pretty bad) tolerable. And most of the couples actually have chemistry – Ealy and Henson have a ton – another basic element of the rom-com that’s not usually considered.

“Think Like a Man” is not a breakthrough film by any stretch but it has a smarter-than-average script, charismatic performers, strong chemistry, and a few big laughs. Ask yourself the last time you could say ANY of that about a big ensemble relationship comedy, much less all of it. I generally loathe films that break men and women down to “Mars/Venus” archetypes but “Think Like a Man” has me rethinking my critical thought process.

“Think Like a Man” stars Michael Ealy, Jerry Ferrara, Meagan Good, Regina Hall, Kevin Hart, Taraji P. Henson, Terrence J, Jenifer Lewis, Romany Malco, Gary Owen, and Gabrielle Union. It was directed by Tim Story and is rated PG-13. It opens on April 20, 2012.

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