

Fearless Comedy of Seth MacFarlane's Original 'Ted'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 28, 2012 - 5:38pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Ted” is one of the most inventive and surprising films of the year. It has a sense of humor that will be very familiar to fans of writer/director Seth MacFarlane’s “Family Guy” but is refreshingly unique in a film genre that is too often stale. In fact, most of the Summer 2012 movies have been incredibly predictable and there’s NOTHING predictable about “Ted.” MacFarlane’s willingness to go strange places for a laugh make “Ted” a solid comedy but his inexperience behind the camera and in screenwriting hold the film back from true greatness.

Narrated in its opening and closing moments by Patrick Stewart, “Ted” opens like a family movie, the tale of a little boy without many friends who makes a wish that his beloved teddy bear will be turned into a real playmate. His dream comes true and Ted springs to life, accompanying John on his journey through life and even becoming a semi-celebrity in the process (a talking teddy bear naturally gets a bit of tabloid attention). Of course, little boys grow up and Ted (voiced by Seth MacFarlane after John grows up) has a tough time becoming an adult. Probably because he’s a talking teddy bear. Ted smokes a lot of pot, watches a lot of ‘80s movies (the film is riddled with references to the films of that era), and screws a lot of hookers.



Ted
Photo credit: Universal Pictures

Of course, John (Mark Wahlberg) thinks Ted is still pretty awesome. He’s still his best friend and girlfriend Lori (Mila Kunis) is surprisingly supportive of her beau’s pint-sized partner in crime. For now. Lori’s friends at work (where she’s employed by a sleazy and scene-stealing Joel McHale) keep telling her that John needs to commit and Lori begins to wonder if the pot-smoking stuffed animal isn’t holding her future husband back from commitment. It doesn’t help that John has a dead-end job (with Matt Walsh and Patrick Warburton) at a rental car

company and when John uses their four-year anniversary to NOT pop the question, Lori starts to wonder where they're going.

It's all an excuse for a litany of sex jokes, pot jokes, and a cavalcade of pop culture references. Many of them, especially the ones that you will never see coming, are truly inspired. "Ted" comes from that school of non-stop comedy in which if one joke doesn't work for you then you need merely wait a few seconds because the next one probably will. MacFarlane is surprisingly sentimental with John and Lori's love (which itself feels like an ode to '80s comedies that often treated their love affairs with less cynicism) but the majority of "Ted" is about making you laugh and no target is off limits. This is not a comedy for anyone who might be turned off by humor that plays a little loose with race, sex, and any other subjects that may be considered taboo. Honestly, if you use the word "taboo," don't see "Ted."



Ted

Photo credit: Universal Pictures

"Ted" passes the most basic, simple tenet of movie criticism –Does the film achieve what it sets out to accomplish? If it's a comedy, is it funny? "Ted" is undeniably funny. It's often very clever and refreshingly unpredictable. It's also too long, poorly paced, and essentially comes apart in the final act. MacFarlane has not quite yet figured out the pacing of a motion picture comedy. Some scenes go on uncomfortably long when a quick edit would have tightened the film while others feel bizarrely truncated like a deleted scene is missing. The pacing is just never quite right. And timing is often what separates a good comedy from a great one.

It's certainly through no fault of the cast. Mark Wahlberg is completely fearless and very funny here and Mila Kunis gets more charmingly beautiful by the day. They're remarkably charismatic and have a surprising amount of chemistry. And, of course, MacFarlane nails the voice work of the title character, clearly having an infectious blast delivering some of the more ridiculous lines.

"Ted" is unapologetically ridiculous and fearless – two traits too often missing from Hollywood comedies. The genre either plays it safe (as in most romantic comedies or anything starring Katherine Heigl) or delivers something predictably raunchy. It's too rare to see something as unique as "Ted" and as MacFarlane tightens his skills as a writer and director it's really easy to think that he'll top this film in the very near future. It's ironic that "Ted" is a film about a man stuck in perpetual adolescence because I can't wait to see how its creator grows up.

"Ted" stars Mark Wahlberg, Mila Kunis, Seth MacFarlane, Joel McHale, Giovanni Ribisi, Patrick Warburton, and Matt Walsh. It was written by MacFarlane and Alex Sulkin & Wellesley Wild and directed by MacFarlane. It is rated R and opens on June 29, 2012.



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