

Judd Apatow Again Fashions Gimmick Into Gold in Uproarious ‘Forgetting Sarah Marshall’

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CHICAGO – After being blitzed by an onslaught of attention-demanding advertising that begged the question “who is Sarah Marshall?” even before you realized it’s a film, anticipation was ravenous.



Kristen Bell as Sarah Marshall in “Forgetting Sarah Marshall”.
Photo credit: IMDb

It became nothing short of voracious upon learning it’s backed by producer Judd Apatow of “Superbad,” “Knocked Up,” “Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby,” “The 40-Year-Old Virgin” and “Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy” fame (also with high hopes for his “Pineapple Express,” which opens on Aug. 8, 2008).

Through his Apatow Productions company, Apatow has made *beaucoup* bucks and a mountainous name by banding together the same stooges time and time again.

In “Forgetting Sarah Marshall,” we’re treated to the return of Bill Hader and Jonah Hill (both in Apatow’s “Superbad” and “Knocked Up” together).

While it’s still early in the year and few films have stood out to date, “Forgetting Sarah Marshall” indeed delivers on its hype as the funniest comedy so far in 2008.

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Apatow has once again fashioned what could have been cheesy gimmick into delicious gold. In a telltale sign of its riotous good time, Chicago critics have even been promising to return on opening weekend for a second paid viewing with friends.

While first-time filmmaking talent is often a precarious, hit-or-miss gamble, it pays off in spades this time.

The film is written by first-time writer Jason Segel (who features himself in "Forgetting Sarah Marshall" as main-character Peter Bretter – and often buck naked, too) and directed by first-time director Nicholas Stoller (who wrote 2005's "Fun With Dick and Jane").

While Segel's writing valiantly laughs you out of your chair all throughout the film, his starring role within his own words takes some time to earn your trust. Up until about halfway through, I kept questioning whether he was tragically miscast for the lead.

His big, teddy-bear demeanor and charming naïveté, though, wins you over by the climax. Here's a small taste of some of his written nuggets of gold, too:

Matthew (played by Jonah Hill): "I have a question for you real quick. What did you think of my demo? Did you get it?"

Aldous Snow (played by Russell Brand): "I was gonna listen to that, but then – um – I just carried on living my life."



Jason Segel (left) and Kristen Bell in "Forgetting Sarah Marshall".
Photo credit: IMDb

Just as much as Segel stars in the film as Peter, Kristen Bell equally co-stars in "Forgetting Sarah Marshall" as the siren everyone has been talking about before even arriving to the theaters in droves: Sarah Marshall.

Bell (who played Veronica Mars in "Veronica Mars") burns up the screen every second she's on it and is cast in the comedy with perfection.

The Ukrainian Mila Kunis – who you'd know as Jackie Burkhart in "That '70s Show" – is a wholesome addition who's part saint and part sinner. Bill Hader as Peter's brother, Brian Bretter, again rocks the casbah in his portrayal of the advice-spewing, Webcam-coaching sibling.

Paul Rudd (also in "Knocked Up") as Chuck the surf-lesson guy is wonderfully way, way out there.



Russell Brand in "Forgetting Sarah Marshall".

Photo credit: IMDb

Jonah Hill is hysterically written in as a waiter named Matthew who not-so-subtly has a professional man crush on the unanticipated diamond in the film’s rough: Russell Brand.

Brand completely oozes himself into the eccentrically carefree, libidinous rock star named Aldous Snow who scoops up Sarah Marshall after she bulldozes Peter Bretter’s heart.

As Peter mourns the loss of his girlfriend and sees his confidence swell, he falls into the lap of Mila Kunis while she’s working at a Hawaiian resort.

Though from the text typed in this review it’d sound catastrophically lame, Peter even woos you with the distinctly unusual and decidedly novel concept of a Dracula rock-band puppet show.

While “Forgetting Sarah Marshall” is tagged with lots of puff and catchphrasing – including “a comedy about getting dumped and taking it like a man” and “the ultimate romantic disaster movie” – the film’s ultimately and indisputably one of the most entertaining ways you could spend 112 minutes.

“Forgetting Sarah Marshall” opened on April 18, 2008.



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