

Turn Down the Invitation to ‘The Big Wedding’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 26, 2013 - 8:09am

- [Amanda Seyfried](#) [2]
- [Ana Ayora](#) [3]
- [Ben Barnes](#) [4]
- [Diane Keaton](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Katherine Heigl](#) [7]
- [Lionsgate](#) [8]
- [Movie Review](#) [9]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [10]
- [Robert De Niro](#) [11]
- [Robin Williams](#) [12]
- [Susan Sarandon](#) [13]
- [The Big Wedding](#) [14]
- [Topher Grace](#) [15]



Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “The Big Wedding” begins with Robert De Niro performing a particular love making maneuver on Susan Sarandon, and is caught in the act by Diane Keaton. What could have happened in a cutting-edge indie feature in 1981 is the basis of a lame bit in 2013, and so it goes for the rest of the film.

The movie is incredibly indecisive. It relishes it’s “R” rating, serving up the aforementioned carnality, as well as a dash of nudity, innuendo and crass absurdity. But at the same time, it wants to be a sentimental statement about love and extended family, and with this element it falls on its face. All of the characters blow with the wind between the two assignments, and the whole thing is a reminder of how, even with a cast of familiar movie stars, if the script stinks the movie stinks. Oddly too, Robin Williams again takes on the role of wacky Catholic priest, as he did in “License to Wed.” One more such role and he will be eligible to skip the first two years of the seminary.

Diane Keaton is Ellie, a divorced mother coming back to her old homestead to witness the marriage of her adopted-from-South-American son Alejandro (Ben Barnes) and Missy (Amanda Seyfried). She walks in on her ex-husband Don (Robert De Niro) and his live-in partner Bebe (Susan Sarandon), but their relationship is friendly. Alejandro’s sister Lyla (Katherine Heigl) and brother Jared (Topher Grace) joins the party, as well as his biological mother Madonna (Patricia Rae) and sister Nuria (Ana Ayora).



Artist and Model: Don (Robert De Niro) and Daughter Lyla (Katherine Heigl) Work it Out in ‘The Big Wedding’
Photo credit: Lionsgate

Complications arise when Alejandro reveals that he never told his biological über-Catholic mother that Don and Ellie had divorced, so they agree to pretend to be married for the weekend to protect the sanctity. Bebe is upset regarding this arrangement, and keeps reminding them at inappropriate times. Also, Lyla's husband has left her, Jared is a 30 year old virgin with the hots for Nuria, and Missy's parents are old school preppies who are suspicious of the groom's Latino roots. This wedding is bound to be bigger than a bridal basket.

There are some laugh moments in this film. Pushing the envelope of the "R" rating allows for some freedoms of language and scenarios, and De Niro does a fairly humorous turn as the Dad who is caught in his own web of deceit. Yet it is all forced into the gooey sentiment that comes out of nowhere, almost as bad as a 1950s sitcom. If the production wants the "R" rating to go all the way, why assume that the audience wants the expected happy ending for all? There is simply no depth to that, and the film fries out like a overloaded circuit breaker.

Take the subplot of the 30 year old virgin doctor (Topher Grace) and the hot Columbian sister...please. It is shoehorned in as much for the purpose of the lovely Ana Ayora to show some skin as any kind of coherent or rational story addition. The situation has a built-in foregone conclusion – it's when they do it, not if. And the fast fading Katherine Heigl has yet another perplexing role as the broken down wife. The circumstance of her getting back together with her husband after all her angst (and stomach problems) is so annoying that it invites instant derision towards the unfortunate Ms. H. and her writer/director.

The old veteran actors are comfortable and seem game for anything, including De Niro doing a unrepentant horny old goat to a point of embarrassment, as one love making scene wakes up the whole house. Now that's hospitality! Diane Keaton, in the end, will be remembered more for her late-career mother roles than her role as Annie Hall. The never-married Keaton has portrayed more wives and mothers in the last 15 years than any other similarly aged actress, and has managed to cinematically canoodle with Woody Allen, Al Pacino, Warren Beatty, Jack Nicholson and now Robert De Niro. Lah-dee-dah, indeed.



Don and Bebe (Susan Sarandon) Delay Compatibility in 'The Big Wedding'
Photo credit: Lionsgate

In another surprise, more interesting actors like Susan Sarandon and Amanda Seyfried are shuffled aside for less appealing turns from Topher Grace, the perfumed stereotypes of the bride's stuffy parents (David Rasche and Christine Ebersole) and the actresses playing the biological family. Did everyone sign up just to work with De Niro? To experience Robin Williams again playing a priest? The big paycheck that came with The Big Wedding?

This film can be deceptive. The trailer could take some of the funnier bits (and there are some) and incorrectly portray it as a raucous romp. All you need to know is that Robert De Niro – the Raging Bull – is shown nailing another name on the family "tree," grown from the acorn and sap his character once planted. Groan.

"The Big Wedding" opens everywhere on April 26th. Featuring Robert De Niro, Diane Keaton, Susan Sarandon, Katherine Heigl, Amanda Seyfried, Topher Grace, Ben Barnes, Ana Ayora, and Robin Williams. Written and directed by Justin Zackham. Rated "R"



[16]

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