

‘Baggage Claim’ is Equivalent of a Crash Landing

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 28, 2013 - 4:31am

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CHICAGO – Experiencing an unfunny comedy is one of the most painful time wasters in the movie going adventure – not only will that time never come back, but wanting to laugh when no motivation for hilarity is produced is like having eternal hiccups. “Baggage Claim” (hic) is (hic) that (hic) sort of movie.

The premise is what kills it before it gets off the ground. Paula Patton plays a woman who is panicking because she is about to turn 30 years old, and has never married (gasp!). Apparently she is supposed to, since her mother has married five times (ha-ha). This setting back of feminism aside, Patton’s attempt at playing a wacky flight attendant is as flat as a runway – she has no timing or comic flair. The film is also awash in upper middle class porn – no matter what the social/economic level of the characters, everybody has an abundance of expensive material goods and living conditions. Also ridiculous are ex-boyfriends of Paula Patton, they are all rich men at the top of their professions. Can’t a girl find a way marry for money these days?

Montana (Patton) is a loser by movie standards – she is about to turn thirty and needs to get married, despite having a decent flight attendant job and the looks to win a beauty pageant. She has the requisite best friends, sassy Gail (Jill Scott) and (wait-for-it) her gay flight attendant colleague Sam (Adam Brody). Her mother Catherine (Jenifer Lewis), married five times, is pressuring Montana to take the plunge, especially since her younger sister has gotten engaged.



For some reason, everybody takes on a project to have Montana meet up with all her ex-boyfriends over 30 days – Thanksgiving to Christmas, naturally – which includes Langston (Taye Diggs), Graham (Boris Kodjoe) and a new guy in the sweepstakes, Quinton (Djimon Hounsou). After going through a series of wacky dates with these guys, she ends up at her sister's rehearsal dinner with a different attitude, trailed by a childhood friend named William (Derek Luke).

This was adapted from a novel by David E. Talbert, screenplay by David E. Talbert and directed by David E. Talbert, who perhaps has gone to the Tyler Perry School of Cinema. There was no backing away, obviously, from the sappiness and unlikeliness of this fantasy, regardless of setting it in the real world. The characters are broad and nearly stereotypical (the sassy best friend), and the humor is bad sitcom level. There was also no connecting thread, it played like a series of lead balloon sketches.

Paula Patton, although a lovely screen presence, can't do the type of comedy that Talbert wrote for her, maybe because it wasn't funny or maybe because she's not a comic actress – nothing wrong with that, except when doing a so-called comedy. Patton also looked suspiciously older than the 30 year old she was playing. Nothing wrong with that either, except she looked like a woman who would never put herself through what the character was put through. And note to Paula, more make-up won't make you that much younger.

The quirks the screenplays gives her old boyfriends questions the highfaluting wealth and power positions that they have achieved. One guy two times her, another loves his dog more than women, and yet another allows Ned Beatty – the Ned Beatty of the film "Deliverance" – to insult his heritage to his face. And all of them have a weird sense of material wealth. As much time and effort was spent on making all the characters lust after shiny objects – a auitor who is a construction contractor knows about Tiffany's – as developing their morality.



Best Friends: Gail (Jill Scott) and Sam (Adrian Brody) Advise Montana in 'Baggage Claim'
Photo credit: Fox Searchlight Pictures

Remarkably, the film perks up in the final half hour, which reveals that perhaps the author had the slam bang ending, and merely wrote the rest of the book/film as window dressing. The greek chorus duo of the sassy best friend and the gay flight come to life at the end, and actually throw some good lines. But that is not enough to wash away the sameness in the film of the anti-feminism, pro-materialism and mother-who-comes-around-in-the-end.

But what is most distressing is that Paula Patton – a beautiful, independent woman of the world (as indicated by her character's past) – is reduced to a quivering mass of insecurities because she's not "married." And no last minute speech at the end can ever disqualify what happened throughout the entirety in the film. The production can't have its idiocy, and then deny it, too.

"Baggage Claim" opens everywhere on September 27th. Featuring Paula Patton, Derek Luke, Taye Diggs, Boris Kodjoe, Jill Scott, Adam Brody, Jenifer Lewis and Djimon Hounsou. Written and directed by David E. Talbert. Rated "PG-13"



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