As Comedy, ‘Table 19’ Only Serves Hor d’Oeuvres

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on March 4, 2017 - 7:37am

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Table 19” is an example of a movie that doesn’t try to do too much. It simply takes its little idea and lets it play out, without the forced subplots and desperate stabs of fake urgency so many studio comedies resort to – it’s one part aimless hang out comedy, one part rom-com. It is an amusing-if-forgettable 87 minutes with a group of funny people who get more laughs than they probably should have from such thin material.

“Table 19” centers on a wedding reception in Michigan. Some of the guests at this reception are seated at that number 19 table, which is next to the bathroom, as far away from the wedding party as you possibly can get, and are the ones with only the most distant of connections to the bride and groom. As the movie itself puts it, this is the table for the people who should have known enough to have replied “no” to the invitation.



The Wedding Guests of ‘Table 19’
Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

There’s the childhood nanny of the bride (June Squibb), a distant cousin (Stephen Merchant) – recently released from prison for crimes unknown – a bickering couple who owns a diner (Craig Robinson and Lisa Kudrow), and the son of a recently deceased family friend (Tony Revoli). They’re joined by the former maid of honor (Anna Kendrick) who was deposed from her spot when the best man and brother of the bride (Wyatt Russell) broke up with her. Each of these characters come complete with their own sets of quirks.

The movie allows its idea and performers to breathe as it moseys towards its conclusion. There’s a pot smoking scene, a wedding band playing a steady succession of dance-ready 1980’s hits, and even a wedding crasher. And I’m not sure if we’re supposed to take the stereotypical rom com ending seriously, complete with a run to a departing ferry boat.

The film’s biggest laughs come from the performers operating outside the main storyline – some of these oddballs work better than others. British comedian Stephen Merchant, in particular, has a field day with his exceedingly awkward alien-like attempts to fit in and make chit chat. The sight of his lanky frame loping about in a pair of pants and a coat far too short for him made me laugh, or at least smile in amusement. Anna Kendrick is okay as well, doing her perfectly serviceable Type A personality character without really adding any new spins. While Lisa Kudrow and Craig Robinson are both funny people, their bored bickering is not one of the film’s strong points.



Lisa Kudrow and Craig Robinson in ‘Table 19’
Photo credit: Fox Searchlight

But even at its worst, “Table 19” doesn’t really offend because it’s too slight to get worked up about – it’s not trying to do anything more than just provide a few mild chuckles for its audience. I don’t know if I’d say you should go out to the theater for this one. Instead, this movie seems ready made for a day of scrolling through Netflix.

”Table 19” opens everywhere on March 3rd. Featuring Anna Kendrick, Craig Robinson, June Squibb, Lisa Kudrow, Stephen Merchant and Tony Revolori. Screenplay by Jay and Mark Duplass. Directed by Jeffrey Blitz. Rated “PG-13”

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