

‘Rough Night’ is More Than Just a Diamond in the Rough

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on June 17, 2017 - 3:24am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The idiotic notion in Hollywood (and in the basements of fanboy mothers everywhere) that women can’t be funny is a joke in itself. Women have been forced to prove themselves on the male-dominated comedic circuit and have come out as successful as their male counterparts. “Rough Night”, despite all of its flaws, is just the most recent example of that.

There is no looking past some of the more obvious conventions used in this and many other bachelor/bachelorette-party-gone-wrong genre films. The set up is typically the same, with each character playing a specific archetype, and having each of them riff off of each other. This is unavoidable. “Hangover” did it. “Bridesmaids” did it. “Rough Night” does it as well. The only difference between the other films and this one is the humor is much more centered around the female experience, and that is the most refreshing part of it. Writers Lucia Aniello and Paul W. Downs have worked on “Broad City” together (also starring Ilana Glazer), and have helped make it one of the best diverse and socially conscious comedies on television today. They inject some of the show’s comedic life-force into the film, but not nearly enough to channel the level of outrageousness that makes the show a must-watch staple.



The party is just getting started in ‘Rough Night’

Photo credit: Columbia Pictures

The story follows the reunion of old college friends, with the moral of the story being no matter how much they’ve changed, they still remained the same. “Rough Night” throws a sentimental jab here and there, but makes its focus clearly on the humor and “Weekend at Bernie’s” vibe it more than occasionally gives off. The humor’s accuracy lands more hits than misses, but the misses are strongly felt since they disrupt the uproarious pacing the film mostly holds throughout. The strongest part of the humor used is the relatability of it all on a social level. At least half of the humor is based on the female-specific experience or as a form of commentary on social issues and the current state of America. Mostly, “Rough Night” uses these issues as a punchline, but their satirical sting is what lingers long after the laughter subsides. The pitfalls of using this kind of humor are that it sometimes comes off as irreverent or false in its convictions, undermining any real message trying to be sent. Luckily, Aniello and Downs navigate the film’s story so that it mostly compliments its intended message.

“Rough Night” may be a little rough around the edges, but it proves to be a unique film in an ocean of ordinary. Aniello directs this film to be both relatable and empowering. Every character is meant to be flawed and reacts as humanly as possible. Of course, the humor may push reactions to over-the-top levels, but the rationale (although morally gray) is always sound. As odd as it may be for me to say this as a man, it was refreshing seeing how open these women talk about socially taboo topics, such as menstruation and female sexuality. These are obviously topics that affect at least half of the world’s population, so they shouldn’t even be stigmatized, and using humor to break down the stigma is not only a great step but also an empowering one. Aniello uses perfect timing when telling these types of jokes, and knows exactly how to frame a scene to make the delivery as strong as possible. Making murder and necrophilia funny are pretty difficult, but this film does that flawlessly.



As my mother once said, “It’s all fun and games until the stripper dies,” like it happened in ‘Rough Night’

Photo credit: Columbia Pictures

It’s hard enough to get a female comedy made, and harder still to be able to get an accurate representation of diversity in it. Films like “Bridesmaids” and the remake of “Ghostbusters” are great comedies, but lack in some form of diversity. “Rough Night” has a wonderful “fuck it” attitude and refuses to compromise when it comes to diversity. Not only are there several people of color in the film, but also various representations of sexual orientations. The film does a great job at acknowledging a variety of different people while never forcing attention on them and making them fall into tokenism. Unlike certain studios that overemphasize the smallest cinematic moments of diversity in their films before they’ve even come out, “Rough Night” just naturally develops them within their characters and treats them like they everyday occurrence they are. The film even went so far as to include one of my favorite drag queens, Bob the Drag Queen, and give the amazing drag community a shout-out as an added bonus. As Ilana’s character in “Broad City” would exclaim, “YAS QUEEN!”

Comedies like these live or die by the cast, but despite a few questionable comedic choices, this ensemble is a major success. Comedy Central veterans Ilana Glazer (“Broad City” and Jillian Bell (“Workaholics”) are always an asset to any situation they are put in. They have effortless chemistry no matter who they work with and can deliver humor in moments you would least expect it. Their one-liners are what keep the momentum going in between the slower moments of the situational comedy. Kate McKinnon, as always, is in a league of her own. Her eccentricities and complete commitment to her characters are always a marvel to behold, and this role is no different. She exudes hilarity from every pore and can bring us to laughter-induced tears with just only a well-timed expression. My only hesitation was with Scarlett Johansson and Zoë Kravitz, the least comically experienced of the group. Both of their characters completely complement the ensemble, keeping them grounded while also feeding off of their energy and delivering several jokes.

“Rough Night” opened everywhere on June 16th. Featuring Scarlett Johansson, Zoë Kravitz, Kate McKinnon, Ilana Glazer, Jillian Bell, Paul W. Downs, Demi Moore, Ty Burrell and Colton Haynes. Screenplay by Lucia Aniello and Paul W. Downs. Directed by Lucia Aniello. Rated “R”



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