

## Despite One Premise, Laughs Are Plenty in ‘The Little Hours’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 14, 2017 - 11:01am

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – It occurred to me in assessing “The Little Hours” that the basic premise is somewhat like “The Beguiled” – a man is taken in, rooster-like, into a henhouse where there are women with “needs.” Except this time, instead of a girl’s boarding school, it is a 14th Century nunnery. Get thee to it, if thou wants to laugheth.

There is basically one premise... the nuns are horny and Dave Franco is willing, or two, if you count that all the participants in the film speak in modern day language, including the frequent throwing of f-bombs. The casting is the key, with the great Aubrey Plaza again stealing many scenes, and the aforementioned Dave Franco’s innocent interaction with his fate, as he gets some action. Throw in Allison Brie, John C. Reilly, Nick Offerman and Fred Armisen (as a Catholic bishop), and this broadside satire of medieval and religiosity does have its moments. And get this, the odious “Catholic League” has condemned the film, which is the best endorsement you’ll receive all weekend.

Dave Franco is Massetto, a servant who lives in the house of Lord Bruno (Nick Offerman, droll as usual). Massetto is messing with the good Lord’s wife, and soon has to escape or face punishment. In his exile, he stumbles upon Father Tomasso (John C. Reilly), who is cleric at the local nunnery. The priest agrees to take the servant in, only if he pretends to be deaf and mute.



Tough Love: Fernanda (Aubrey Plaza) Distracts Masetto (Dave Franco) in ‘The Little Hours’  
*Photo credit: Gunpowder & Sky*

As soon as the stud Masetto begins his duties, the nuns’ monastic state starts to unravel. It begins with Alessandra (Alison Brie), who seduces the new tenant almost immediately. It is followed by a bevy of willing suitors, led by Marta (Jemima Kirke), Francesca (Lauren Weedman) and Fernanda (Aubrey Plaza). The reverend Sister Marea (Molly Shannon) and Bishop Bartolomeo (Fred Armisen) can hardly contain the tide, once it (rocks and) rolls in.

This is a bit of salacious fun, and hurts no one – if the Catholics can’t take a joke, then the old “dish it out, can’t take it” aphorism comes to mind. Again, like “The Beguiled,” you cannot distract your way from a biological urge, and the commentary on a religion restricting the very thing that we do is obvious from the get go. I see names like Franco, Reilly, Shannon and (Kate) Micucci in the cast, and methinks they didn’t mind a bit of the old recovering Catholic snarking.

This is practically an all-star cast, and director Jeff Baena – who also adapted the 14th Century novella in “The Decameron” series – let them do what they do best. Aubrey Plaza as Fernanda is a stand out, she throws sass and f-bombs like nobody else. John C. Reilly and Molly Shannon, as the double agent priest and nun, know comic timing to the point that their characters get a laugh just by showing up. And Fred Armisen, that old upstager, has too much fun as the Bishop.





Kate Micucci, Allison Brie and Aubrey Plaza of ‘The Little Hours’  
Photo credit: Gunpowder & Sky

But it is the underrated Franco, Dave, that does some “heavy lifting” and his wide-eyed “innocent not so innocent” act is well played. The story starts to wander a bit towards the end, which is remarkable since the film is only 90 minutes, but the cast keeps everything weird. There is good chemistry in this ensemble, which always makes a weird story that much easier to digest.

Back to the Catholics. From the 1930s to approximately the 1970s, the Legion of Decency (worst. superhero. group. ever.) rated films weekly for their Papist congregations, and the worst grade a film could get was “C” for “Condemned.” With the modern-day Catholic League giving their equivalent grade of “C” for “The Little Hours,” that would be the first film I’d request before going through the gates of hell. Prepare ye, the way of the “law.”

*“The Little Hours” continues its nationwide release in Chicago on July 14th, at the Music Box Theatre, 3733 North Southport, Chicago. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Nicole Kidman, Colin Farrell, Kirsten Dunst, Alison Brie, Dave Franco, Aubrey Plaza, John C. Reilly, Nick Offerman, Molly Shannon, Fred Armisen and Paul Reiser. Screenplay adapted and directed by Jeff Baena. Rated “C” I mean “R”*



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [21]  
Writer, Editorial Coordinator  
[HollywoodChicago.com](http://HollywoodChicago.com)  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [20]

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