Melissa McCarthy is the Charming ‘Life of the Party’

Submitted by PatrickMcD [1] on May 11, 2018 - 2:06pm

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Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Melissa McCarthy is a comedic force to be reckoned with, able to wring laughs improbably out of the stingiest of material. She always manages to find the funny, which helps elevate everyone around her, and so she slips easily in the durable friendly constructs of the campus comedy in “Life Of The Party.”



Melissa McCarthy Matriculates in ‘Life of the Party’
Photo credit: Warner Bros

McCarthy stars as Deanna, a Mom to a college age daughter, who has an affinity for bedazzled sweaters and a “Mom perm.” When her husband (Matt Walsh) decides he wants a divorce, Deanna decides to go back to school to get the degree she never quite finished. This is a fairly broad premise, complete with frat parties, sorority hazing, and hookups… and of course it has to be the same college her daughter attends. But McCarthy makes a real effort to come to things from a very human place. She’s relatable, and reflects a choice many homemakers had to make when they wanted to set off on their adult lives and family life got in the way of their dreams.

McCarthy has impeccable comic timing, and it also helps that she has a supporting cast full of endearingly odd ringers, such as Maya Rudolph as her best friend and Gillian Jacobs as a sorority girl who spent 8 years in a coma. There’s nothing groundbreaking here, so we get the requisite mommy-makeover scene, and McCarthy gets to be a subject of MILF-level desire from a frat brother of her daughter’s boyfriend. But the scenes are handled just the right way to be both sweet and amusing. I even enjoyed her shared love of pun based humor in archeology class with a bow tied professor (Chris Parnell).

However, the moments when the film gets extra broad is when it falters. A scene where McCarthy appears to have a panic attack while giving an oral presentation is meant to be an over the top escalation, but it just seems to go on forever. And the requisite let’s-get-stoned sequence – involving McCarthy and the sorority sisters unknowingly binging on weed infused chocolate – just kind of lays there lifelessly.



Melissa McCarthy Makes a Point in ‘Life of the Party’
Photo credit: Warner Bros

McCarthy’s collaborations with husband and director Ben Falcone have not been her strongest work. “Life of the Party” is their third film with Falcone in the director’s chair, and is the most consistently funny to date. She managed to wring a few laughs out of their previous effort, “The Boss,” which I thought was something of a minor miracle, but in this film they score a lot more hits this time around. This is an appealing and amiable throwback that gives McCarthy a funny “Back to School” vehicle all her own.

”Life of the Party” opens nationwide on May 11th. Featuring Melissa McCarthy, Gillian Jacobs, Debby Ryan, Julie Bowen, Stephen Root, Maya Rudolph, Christina Aguilera, Chris Parnell and Matt Walsh. Written by Ben Falcone and Melissa McCarthy. Directed by Ben Falcone. Rated “PG-13”


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