

Movie review

Sandler, Nicholson shine despite lukewarm plot

Sean Hennen

Reporter

It was inevitable that "Anger Management" would spring to No. 1 at the box office in its opening weekend. The film grossed an impressive \$44.5 million, the highest ever for an April release.

After months of a cinematic slump (Oscar nominees playing in limited release notwithstanding), audiences saw the comedic pairing of lovable goofball Adam Sandler and the always-amazing Jack Nicholson as a surefire winner.

Unfortunately, the movie is not nearly as good as the cast, as recent promotional advertisements would make you believe. It almost feels as if the filmmakers behind "Anger Management" assumed the cast alone would support the entire film and neglected the plot and pacing of the film.

Director Peter Segal, best known for helming Chris Farley's neo-comedic classic "Tommy Boy," has set the cameras and script on autopilot during the course of this film, hoping that something brilliant will occur on screen. Not even close.

Sandler plays low-key New

Yorker Dave Buznik. This mild-mannered chap has a boss who doesn't respect him, a girlfriend (Marisa Tomei) he is afraid to kiss in public and a jealousy problem toward social acquaintance Andrew (Allen Covert).

Through a series of miscommunications and instances of extremely bad luck, including a truly humorous and relatable scene on an airplane, Buznik ends up in the care of famed anger specialist Dr. Buddy Rydell (Nicholson).

Faced with possible jail time, Buznik is ordered by the courts to strictly adhere to Rydell's slightly unorthodox means of anger management. This includes the good doctor moving in with Buznik, following him to work, and forcing him to confront a childhood bully in one of the movie's few outright hilarious moments.

The rest of "Anger Management" can be summed up as a muddled mess of thin jokes and desperate attempts to drag laughter from the audience.

The film is stuffed with cameos, which usually signals a movie is struggling. The brief roles featuring Woody Harrelson as a drag queen and John C. Reilly as a Buddhist monk are

inspired.

Other cameos, including a pointless appearance by former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani, are trite.

Whatever credibility Sandler may have rendered with critics and audiences alike with the generally praised "Punch Drunk Love," he has once again thrown away. As

an executive producer on this film, Sandler attempted to reach out to greater numbers with the casting of Nicholson, but association alone won't do it.

Nicholson is merely coasting through this movie. He knows that there is absolutely no room to move in a cramped plot full of tired clichés and sight gags. Instead, he simply falls back on his tried-but-true trademark eyebrows and facial expressions.



Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures
A smug Jack Nicholson and outraged Adam Sandler pair up in "Anger Management." While the film grossed \$44.5 million its opening weekend, the lukewarm plot is uninspired.

Luckily for Nicholson, he has just given one of the best performances of his career in "About Schmidt" and therefore, audiences will no doubt forgive him for this lame cash-in on his famous name.

Rating: Nicholson is the only ray of light in this otherwise messy comedy.

Contact Sean Hennen at pendulum@elon.edu or 278-7247.



In theaters:

Friday

"Bulletproof Monk" (PG-13)

Starring Chow Yun-Fat, Sean William Scott

"Holes" (PG)

Starring Sigourney Weaver, Henry Winkler, Shia La Beouf

"Malibu's Most Wanted" (PG-13)

Starring Jaime Kennedy, Ryan O'Neal

In concert:

Thursday

Ziggy's - Winston-Salem

Cowboy Mouth, Wil Seabrook

Tickets \$15/advance; show at 9 p.m.

Go! Room 4 - Carrboro

Jennifer Nettles

Tickets \$8; show at 9 p.m.

Raleigh Convention Center - Raleigh

The String Cheese Incident

Tickets \$27.50; show at 7 p.m.

Monday

Ziggy's

Guster, Wheat

Tickets \$15/door; show at 9 p.m.

Lincoln Theatre - Raleigh

Third Eye Blind

Tickets through E-bay; show 9 p.m.

Tuesday

Ziggy's

Third Eye Blind

Tickets through E-bay; show at 9 pm.

New Releases:

Tuesday

Madonna - "American Life"

Tower of Power - "Oakland Zone"

Daniel Lanois - "Shine"

Opeth - "Damnation"

Maria McKee - "High Dive"

Variety is the Spice of Life

Rock, Stock and 2 Smoking Stages is coming April 26. Sponsored by WSOE and Student Union Board, the show will feature Virginia Coalition and several other bands, including Evoka, Weszi, Cinema 8, Revelation Darling, The Flood, Drive She Said, OHE, The Reverend Jenkins Blues Project and the B-town All-Stars. Tickets are available in downstairs Moseley and are \$5 with a Phoenix card and \$10 without. Proceeds will benefit the Special Olympics of Alamance County. Volunteers are also needed to staff the event's food concessions, tickets sales and collection, stage changing, set-up and clean-up.

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