

'Wedding Planner' Drips With Cheese and Predictable Clichés

By Allison Rost
Staff Writer

For as long as I've been writing movie reviews, my friends have rarely wanted to come with me on account of the movies I've had to see.

But this time, the promise of Matthew McConaughey, a light romantic comedy and the scenery of San Francisco inspired everyone to accompany me to the theater to see "The Wedding Planner."



While the movie delivers on those promises, the stupidity of the plot was quite successful at making us swear off any form of romantic comedy for a long time.

If you didn't quite gather the entire story from the trailers, here's a quick retread. Jennifer Lopez plays Mary, an unlucky-in-love wedding planner who unknowingly falls for McConaughey's

Steve, the groom in the most important wedding of her career.

She tries to swallow her feelings, but a chance encounter sets the emotional floodgates open. Will Steve and Mary end up together? Was there really ever any doubt?

One bright spot in the film comes from the two leads. Lopez was robotic in "The Cell," but here she shows some true potential for Julia Roberts-style comedic talent. McConaughey is charming and plays all the right nuances for his part. They also share a dance sequence that is easily the highlight of the movie.

Brigitte Wilson also does a sufficient job as Steve's soon-to-be-jilted fiancée but smartly stays clear of turning her into the unlikable cardboard character that is stereotypical of the genre.

But the lines they all have to say are so ridiculous that my friends and I were giggling throughout the serious parts and cringing at the lame jokes.

In the attempt to create something different from the run-of-the-mill chick

flick, writers threw in everything from wacky match-making relatives to wacky wedding planner assistants to wacky European suitors.

All of that is on top of the cheesiness inherent to a movie like this. When Steve professes his love for Mary, it's painfully apparent that no guy would ever talk like that.

Mary and Steve meet when she gets her shoe stuck in a manhole and a dumpster comes hurtling toward her, but the audience is supposed to believe that once she frees her foot she is stupid enough to risk retrieving her shoe.

The movie is fraught with this sort of farfetched plot device. The fact that Lopez's character is Italian just scratches the surface.

As one friend said as she leaned over to me, "This isn't even close to being believable. And you can quote me on that."

So I did.

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Pop Culture Parties Like It's 1989

We may be through with the past, but the past is not through with us.

This quote, taken from a marvelous little movie by Paul Thomas Anderson called "Magnolia," kept popping into my head as I listened to the newest radio station to emerge in my hometown: a 24-hour all-'80s music leviathan of nostalgia.



How is it that we just barely get the 1990s behind us, and now suddenly the not-too-distant prior decade has become hip? From music and clothes to movies and attitude, the years that spawned Spadau Ballet and "Silver Spoons" have seeped into our next generation's septic tank of pop culture.

OK, the trend that includes wearing slap bracelets and torn sweatshirts (à la "Flashdance") did not totally take us by surprise. After thousands of years of humankind, originality has gone the way of Hypercolor shirts. Americans love to dig up the past, especially the '80s. It started relatively early, almost as soon as we turned the calendar year to 1990, and has not slowed down since.

Music has been the biggest culprit of not letting Americans let go of the past.

Hell, VH1 forbids you to forget the '80s. "Behind the Music" and "Before They Were ..." make singers like Leif Garrett and bands like Steppenwolf more accessible to impressionable young viewers than their parents when they were teens at the time. Not that it's a bad thing ... but how long can

Garrett last?

TV heralds the umpteenth collection of hits (including those from Wham and Tears for Fears) from the '80s which have been assembled for your listening pleasure (err ... discomfort). But seriously, music back then was not so bad. I cringe at the fact that our music today lacks of originality so much that we either have the choice of "oldies" from the '80s, the latest N'Sync song, or the latest carbon-copy mailed-in release from the Cash Money Millionaires.

Fashion is the last trend that I ever notice. Leave that to the stylish. But every time I go home, my mother/sister/aunt claims that something is going back into style, which translated means that I have something very old in my closet that I can now wear again with little to no embarrassment.

Just thinking back to elementary school, when your mom bought your clothes, gives me an overwhelming sense of fright and joy. On one hand, I was always clothed (even though streaking was an insanely common occurrence in a male-dominated household). Consequently, my mother never went to school with me to see how "behind the times" I actually was. Thick skin is grown at a young age, and I was the main one suffocating.

But, with a smile on my face and a glint in my eye, I welcome all '80s movies with open arms. Recent films such as "The Wedding Singer" and "American Psycho" were wonderful reminders of how funny our culture was back then, even though the latter did include ritual killings. Movies

made during my elementary school years seemed to be less about money and more about making my grandparents laugh. It worked and I laughed because of it.

With the looming Hollywood strike that will surely be affecting all that comes to our local multiplexes, I challenge every studio to dig deep into their collective vaults of celluloid and bring to us the finest morsels of '80s you have to offer.

Bring us "The Goonies" and "Sixteen Candles" with improved and reworked prints. Unleash the fury of "Back to the Future" and "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" in DTS (otherwise referred to by a close friend as Damn Tight Sound). It worked for "The Exorcist" and those George Lucas sci-fi flicks. Trust me, do it and peeps such as I will line up with money in hand. Screw the new blockbusters.

Attitude is what ultimately defines a decade. The '80s were years soaked in attitude. Everyone had it, even Michael Jackson, who thought he was bad and told people to beat it. The '80s reared Generation X, a certain group that we, as college students, either are grouped into or share many values and sensibilities with. Young children have begun to discover the lost decade of the 1980s through the wonderful invention of cable TV. They like it and we need to come to grips with the fact that it isn't going away. Peace out, word to your mother.

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Local Label Keeps With Indie Tradition

By Jason Arthurs
Staff Writer

Passions don't always pay the bills, as James Rhodes knows all too well. The 24-year-old founder of Moment Before Impact, the latest addition to Chapel Hill's roster of rock labels, hasn't quit his day job yet.

But if there were doubts about the health of the indie spirit in Chapel Hill, Rhodes and his "Rock Mafia" prove them wrong.

Rhodes, who graduated from Virginia Tech with a mathematics degree, moved to Chapel Hill only two years ago. It didn't take long for Rhodes to get bored with his day job as a Web designer and decide to start putting out records.

"I just had the idea to start off small and learn," he said.

Starting off small for Rhodes meant releasing seven-inch singles by local bands like Sorry About Dresden and Three Stigmata.

He even moved in with two of Sorry About Dresden's members.

"It's cool, but they practice there and it's kind of loud," he said. "It makes it hard to do stuff when you have a drum kit outside your room."

Things got off to a rocky start when Rhodes, who originally called his label

Tri-Tone Records, got word that that name was already taken.

"We got a letter from a lawyer at Tri-Tone Records," he said. "I brainstormed for a long time with what I wanted to name it. I wanted to pick something I thought no one in the world would have."

Since picking up the name Moment Before Impact, the label has released material from area bands the White Octave, V. Sirin, Fin Fang Foom and Strunken White.

Two of the label's bands in particular have received some attention from fans and other labels nationwide. The White Octave recently released a full-length album (recorded by legendary producer Bob Weston, who has worked with Archers of Loaf and Polvo) on Charlotte's Deep Elm Records. Sorry About Dresden has also received attention from larger labels.

But Rhodes said he has no hard feelings when his bands release material on other labels; rather, he's happy for them.

"This reflects the strong sense of community that has developed among the bands on Moment Before Impact, despite its short existence."

"Everybody has a good relationship with everyone else, and they are very supportive," he said. "If someone is playing a show, everyone goes. It's our

own little scene."

And Rhodes is content with having his own "little scene" with just a few bands. Although he said he would like for the label to at least be self-supporting, he said he does not want to force it to grow too fast.

"If it happens it happens," he said. "I'm going to take my time and see where it leads. I think everything works out in the end, and I have faith it will."

Rhodes doesn't take himself or the label too seriously, adding that he and the bands on Moment Before Impact would challenge any other-label in town to a game of basketball.

"I think we can take Merge (Records)," he joked. "They've got to be hitting 30 or 35, and we've got some size."

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