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FORGETTING SARAH MARSHALL

Director Nicholas Stoller's *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* is a happy movie about misery, but during its first half hour or so, the film's rhythms are so unusual that you might not be sure *what* it is.

Produced by Judd Apatow (so know going in that you *will* see a penis) and written by its star, Jason Segel, the movie finds young composer Peter Bretter escaping to Hawaii after being dumped by his TV-star girlfriend (Kristin Bell), and winding up at ... get this ... the *exact same hotel* that she's staying at with her new beau (Russell Brand). Add a potential new love interest (Mila Kunis), some nutty, familiar supporting goofs (Paul Rudd, Jonah Hill, Bill Hader ...) and *presto* - Apatow-authenticated hilarity ensues!

Except it *doesn't*, exactly; once Segel's bruised, morose Peter arrives at his island resort, the entire tone of the movie shifts, and not to *Forgetting Sarah Marshall's* detriment. The film appears to take its cue from its new landscape, and presents its comedic humiliations and romantic encounters with a more contemplative, thoughtful ease than you may be expecting; everything from the confrontations between the romantic rivals to the lead's comic

"Aloha!" "Oy!": "Forgetting Sarah Marshall," "88 Minutes," and "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed"

Written by Mike Schulz

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despair is treated seriously, but nothing turns out to be that big a deal. It takes a bit of time to get on Fo

Forgetting Sarah Marshall

's wistful, occasionally melancholy wavelength, but it's always subtly, inventively performed - *That '70s Show*

's Kunis is positively revelatory - and you end up enjoying the movie more and more as it progresses. One of the film's great running gags finds Peter working on a puppet-theatre musical of

Dracula

, and when we finally see a snippet of the finished product, it's surprisingly great. The movie is, too.



88 MINUTES

After 105 minutes of the torture thriller *88 Minutes* (and don't get me started on *that* unfortunate piece of false hope ...), a title card pops onscreen that reads: "Directed by Jon Avnet." Three title cards later, we get this one: "A film by Jon Avnet." Is it possible that the man is actually *proud* of this repugnant piece of crap?

Al Pacino plays a forensic scientist for the FBI who receives a threatening phone call in which he's told he has 88 minutes to live. Five minutes later, after much narrative ludicrousness, he gets a call telling him he has 83 minutes to live. Four minutes later And so it goes for the rest of the movie's it-sure-felt-longer-than-88-minutes running length. Although I'm happy to report that we actually do occasionally get 20 or so uninterrupted minutes of respite from this irritating narrative device, after a while you're kind of *hoping* that Pacino's damned cell phone would ring, if only to put a momentary halt to the sounds of good actors giving really bad performances (Alicia Witt, Leelee Sobieski, Amy Brenneman, and Neal McDonough all hit career lows), and the score trying desperately to create tension even though it's obvious that nothing *really* interesting is gonna happen 'til the clock runs up. (And even *then*

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it isn't interesting. Inane, yes. Interesting, no.)

But with Pacino in the lead, *88 Minutes* is actually *worse* than your ordinary crummy thriller; it's a miserably depressing one. Was it really less than five years ago that the actor delivered that stunning Roy Cohn in

America

Angels in

?

Pacino, here, isn't delivering a performance so much as an outsize Pacino *impression*

; he desperately overplays the rhythms and cadences that have made him a staple of a million amateur impersonators, and his gravelly braying of "

What

?!?" is louder than the screams of the women being hog-tied and slaughtered for the audience's delectation. The actor employed his too-familiar qualities to fine effect in

Two for the Money

and

Ocean's Thirteen

, but he may be impossible to cast in anything other than comedies now; I would've laughed at him in

88 Minutes

if I didn't feel

this close

to crying.



EXPULSED: NO INTELLIGENCE ALLOWED

On my way to a screening of *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, I experienced one of those drives in which every traffic light seemed conspiratorially aligned to turn red just as I was approaching it, causing me to enter the movie five minutes late. Having seen the remainder of the film, I'm a little sorry that I wasn't

ninety

-five minutes late, if only because I didn't feel particularly welcome at it. The movie is a tacky, patronizing documentary on the presumed worldwide attack against intelligent-design theorists, yet it isn't without enjoyment; Ben Stein, in a business suit and sneakers, shlumps his way

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through the film in endearing fashion, and for a while, it's sort of fun watching the liberal intelligentsia getting the Michael Moore treatment. (One scientist says he longs for the day when religion is treated "like knitting" and "something fun to do on the weekends." Boo! Hiss!) I'm sorry, though - once

Expelled

started connecting the teaching of evolution to Nazism, eugenics, and (

gasp!

) the horrors of Planned Parenthood, and once that woman in our auditorium began vocalizing her pleasure at

Expelled

's childish tactics, I wanted nothing more than to get the hell out of there.