

'America's Sweethearts' a sour romantic comedy

By Ellen Blevens
For *entire!*

Unfortunately for moviegoers, "America's Sweethearts" stars popular

actors like Julia Roberts, Catherine Zeta-Jones, John Cusack and Billy Crystal.

That is unfortunate because many people will be drawn by the star power and disappointed when they actually see it.

Legendary publicist Lee Phillips (Crystal) has one chance to save his job — get Hollywood sweethearts (and soon to be ex-spouses) Gwen Harrison (Zeta-Jones) and Eddie Thomas (Cusack) back together to promote their new movie.

The two lovebirds had broken up after Gwen was discovered bedding Spanish hunk, Hector (Hank Azaria). Lee organizes a media event and asks Kiki (Julia Roberts), Gwen's personal assistant and sister, to get Gwen to the event any way possible. Lee sets out to convince Eddie, who has been manching herbs in an emotional rehab center, to also attend the publicity weekend.

Of course, the plan succeeds, and the two unwillingly appear

together publicly. Everything is going along perfectly dysfunctionally, when Eddie and Kiki discover they have feelings for each other. Then things get slightly interesting.

For a romantic comedy, this movie has very little comedy and almost no romance. The main love story, between Kiki and Eddie, develops over one day and one night. The audience is supposed to believe that, in the end, Eddie would choose Kiki over Gwen. I'm not convinced. Just because Eddie and Kiki have a good dinner conversation and one night together, does not suggest that they are hopelessly in love.

The few laughs the film got were during disturbing scenes between Crystal's character and a doberman, and during the first few scenes with Hank Azaria doing his Spanish accent with a hisp. This gets very old quickly. The characters are also weak.

Zeta-Jones' Gwen is too one-dimensional, spending the entire movie whining about herself and playing the spoiled movie star. Cusack's character, Eddie, is too loony at the beginning and changes too much by the end.

Review

America's Sweethearts

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STARRING: Julia Roberts, Billy Crystal, Catherine Zeta-Jones, John Cusack, Hank Azaria, Christopher Walken, Stanley Tucci, and Seth Green
DIRECTED BY: Joe Roth
RATED: PG-13 for language and crude and sexual humor

Even though 18 months of therapy couldn't do anything for him, one day with his egotistical ex-lover seems to make all the difference.

There are a few bright spots in "America's Sweethearts," but none that redeem the film. Christopher Walken's character, the neurotic director Hal Weidmann is wonderful.

Weidmann, an Oscar-winning director, buys the cabin formerly owned by the Unabomber to make his masterpiece film starring Eddie and Gwen, "Time over Time." No one has seen



Billy Crystal and Julia Roberts perfect the art of schmoozing in "America's Sweethearts."

his finished product until the first screening at the media weekend.

The screening of "Time over Time" is the highlight of the film. I won't give away any surprises about Weidmann's direction for the movie, but I wish I could have watched the entire

Melinda Sue Gordon/Revolution Studios
perfect the art of schmoozing in screening of "Time over Time" instead of "America's Sweethearts."

"America's Sweethearts" could be a career ender for less established stars. For Roberts and Zeta-Jones, however, this will just be a mere blemish on their resumes.