

'50 First Dates' Not a Bad Way To Spend An Afternoon

By Mark Cameron
Contributor

Have you ever walked into a movie, thinking, "Man, I'm going to hate this!" Have you ever sat in a theater, waiting for the previews to roll, and contemplate walking out right then and there to sneak your way into another movie? I did while waiting for Adam Sandler's '50 First Dates' to begin. I'm not sure why, really. (Maybe it's because I wanted to go see Charlize Theron kill people in 'Monster,' and my buddy didn't. Yeah, that probably had something to do with it.) It's not that I don't like Adam Sandler. Sandler was great on Saturday Night Live and movies like 'The Wedding Singer' and 'The Water Boy' are always good for a couple of laughs; it's just that after awhile you get tired of seeing Sandler playing a variation of the same lovable loser in every movie. But, you know what? Sandler isn't a lovable loser in this one; he's Henry Roth, a hot shot marine biologist living the life in Hawaii— by day he's healing sea lions, walruses, and dolphins and at night he's a player, romancing all the attractive tourist ladies. (That doesn't sound like a bad life.) That all changes when he meets Lucy Whitmore (Drew Barrymore), an art teacher. The two hit it off instantly, but there is

a catch: due to a car accident a year earlier, Lucy has had her short term memory erased. She remembers everything that happened up to the moment of the accident, but nothing that followed afterwards (including Henry). The rest of the movie, has Henry trying to prove to Lucy everyday that the two are a couple while alleviating the suspicions of her protective father (Blake Clark, a.k.a. Farmer Fran from 'The Water Boy.') and her wannabe bodybuilder brother (Sean Astin).

'50 First Dates' isn't a bad movie; it's one of those movies, where you might not remember half the scenes in it, but you remember laughing a lot. It doesn't hurt either that the cast is very likeable. Sandler is funny — gone is his usual hostility and anger, replaced with a more laid back sense of humor which suits him to a tee. Barrymore isn't given a lot of laughs here, but she's not boring either. The two have chemistry, and just as they did in 'The Wedding Singer,' they play off each other really well. Rob Schneider is also funny as Henry's horny married best friend who lives vicariously through Henry's one night stands. '50 First Dates' isn't anything out of the ordinary, but if you're looking for a couple of laughs, it's not a bad way to kill an afternoon

The Bottom Line On Cold Mountain

By Morgan Hughes-Davies
Contributor

Starring: Jude Law, Nicole Kidman,
Renee Zellweger, Donald Sutherland
Directed by Anthony Minghella

I have witnessed few movies with romantic plots. I have seen my fair share of amative subplots, but rarely was there an occasion where the romance took centre stage. Cold Mountain carries on this tradition. The film doesn't forget its sub-plots, but the romance between Inman (a thoughtful Jude Law) and Ada (A barely convincing Nicole Kidman) plays second fiddle to the action. The plot revolves around Inman, who is a resident carpenter of Cold Mountain, a town located in North Carolina (this was filmed in Virginia). War with the Yankees appears imminent, and Inman is determined to enlist.

Then one day a preacher (Donald Sutherland being serviceable) and his daughter Ada move into Cold Mountain. Inman and Ada become well acquainted almost instantly after she arrives. The whole scene involving their introduction felt nothing less than predictable, which is how the film treats their relationship throughout. Despite the time they spend together, Inman still wishes to enlist. Ada can appreciate his motives, and, before he leaves, she makes him promise to "Come back to me one day."

Cold Mountain's dedication to grim and gritty action is realized in the opening scene, in which a camp inhabited by Confederate soldiers,

Inman included, is torn apart by explosives set by the Yankees. Inman, seeing the after-effects, tires of the war and decides to desert from the army. His journey back to Cold Mountain is no less gory, but with fewer special effects. The film alternates between Inman's journey and Ada's struggle to survive in a town that is dominated by a man named Heig (Ray Winstone, providing violence for violence's sake) and his band of deserter hunting cowboys.

Cold Mountain is a pleasant enough escapist movie, but it didn't do anything that I hadn't seen before. I never got the feeling that I would feel rewarded or enriched for having watched it. The "surprise" ending was predictable, and despite the dialogue, the acting, and the drama, I never really grew attached to any of the characters enough to care about what happened to them.

In the end, I'm guessing that Cold Mountain is probably going to become a cult classic. However, I personally prefer to define 'cult classic' as being a film that is both under appreciated, yet innovative. But Cold Mountain is not innovative. It's more of the same.

The Bottom Line

Good acting and a cohesive plot can go a long way, but those hopeful for something new and inventive might want to look elsewhere.