Bad Teacher

92 Minutes

R

Rating: **

Let’s cut right to the chase, shall we? Bad Teacher really should have been called Bad Movie.

Not that it had to be a turkey. The basic plot actually sounds kind of promising. Cameron Diaz stars as Elizabeth Halsey, a 7th-grade teacher who hates pretty much everything about her job and dreams of being rescued from the doldrums of her life by a suitable Prince Charming...that is, her retirement plan is to marry money. As our story opens she’s all set to leave middle school behind forever and start living the good life with her rather clueless but pleasantly rich fiancé. But when he wises up to her act and calls of the planned nuptials, Elizabeth has to resentfully return to teaching. Alas, there is hope. A new rich and eligible teacher has been hired, and Elizabeth is determined to steal his heart...or at least his wallet...before rival teacher Ms. Squirrel beats her to it. Will Elizabeth realize her dream of becoming the ultimate trophy wife? Or will she actually grow up and realize instead how shallow that aspiration really is?

I can’t help but wonder how this movie might have turned out if it had been produced as a romantic comedy instead of as a Hangover wanna-be. If the dialogue, characters, and heart at the center of it all had been developed along different lines, the result might have been a pretty good flick. Instead, we get one cheap throwaway gag after another, most of them decidedly humorless and frequently vulgar. As for heart—don’t look for a pulse in this one. It’s all a remarkably chilly affair, one that rarely evokes emotion of any variety and does little to make us care much about Elizabeth’s misadventures one way or the other.

More’s the pity because Cameron Diaz is a tremendously gifted actress. Yes, she’s drop-dead gorgeous and looks cute in the Daisy Dukes she wears to a school car wash, but beyond that she has proven repeatedly in the past to possess remarkable range and a rare ability to convey powerful onscreen emotion. Sadly, this is not a movie that displays her talents to their fullest. To her credit, Diaz works the script to a hilt and plays Elizabeth as well as anyone probably could have, but it’s just not a worthwhile role.

Sure, now and then I laughed at Bad Teacher’s feeble stabs at humor, but for the most part watching this film was a joyless experience. Hopefully Cameron Diaz’s next movie will be a step up from this one. Unfortunately, that wouldn’t take a whole lot.