I Don’t Know How She Does It

PG-13

89 Minutes

Rating: **

Sarah Jessica Parker returns to the big screen in I Don’t Know How She Does It, a comedy about a working wife and mother stretched to the breaking point and beyond by all her myriad responsibilities to home, family, and career. Parker plays Kate Reddy, a business executive who lands a dream job working with the enigmatic Jack Abelhammer, (a caustic Pierce Brosnan). But her job requires almost constant travel from one city to the next, so that her husband and two young children become little more than a blur on her radar. Kate lies awake at night making endless mental lists for the next day, but though she never stops moving she never seems to catch up with her work, her family, or even herself. Can Kate find the proper balance in her life, or will it all come crashing down around her?

Sarah Jessica Parker is a popular actress, thanks in large part to the mega-hit franchise that is Sex and the City. But while the role of Kate Reddy may seem tailor-made for her, Parker never really makes it work. Kate truly is a mixed-up person who can’t decide what she genuinely wants in life, and even though the ending is supposed to be a romantic, happy one, it doesn’t really clear anything up. The script doesn’t help Parker out much; the jokes are rarely funny, and the dialogue very poorly crafted. Director Douglas McGrath doesn’t do anything particularly imaginative with his picture, so that everything is as visually unimpressive as it is nearly humorless. The best parts of the movie are the “interviews” some of the characters have which allow them to go beyond their dramatic bounds within the actual story. Those are sometimes genuinely amusing, but they are only momentary diversions. The other bright spot is Pierce Brosnan, whose sarcastic but likeable businessman is perhaps the only character who rings true.

Parker’s legions of fans may still flock to see this one, but I Don’t Know How She Does It isn’t likely to make many of them happy. The stilted script, pedestrian direction and muddled plot all spell disaster. The movie is quite short, and one wonders if ten or fifteen extra minutes to broaden characterization and produce a climax that actually delivers some resolution might have been a good idea. We’ll never know, but as it stands, I Don’t Know How She Does It is disappointing on every front.