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Ted 2 Delivers on its 'R' Rating Alone

This paper explores a method of critical thinking by discussing Ted McFarlane's Ted 2, starring Mark Wahlberg. A sequel to the original, it was likely an attempt to continue to capitalize on the first film, which ended up earning over \$500 million worldwide. While Ted 2 did make about twice its nearly \$60 million in costs, it did not perform nearly as well as its predecessor and, in general, was far less popular with movie reviewers and consumers.

The following sections examine the movie, first, by developing a set of criteria by which to evaluate the movie, second, by justifying these, and third, by gauging whether the film held up to expectations. Included in this analysis are several prominent reviews. These note that Ted 2 may have suffered from displaying a lack of sensitivity, particularly with respect to civil rights issues at a time of racial strife in the United States. Also, the lack of high level comedic material and tendency to devolve into vulgar side-quests may have detracted from the overall comedic quality. The author also develops a personal view based on a screening of the movie. Given these and other considerations, the final section concludes.

1. Brief Synopsis

Wahlberg plays a now-divorced character, 'John,' who attends Ted's wedding. Soon afterward, Ted becomes convinced that his only means of saving an already troubled marriage is to have a baby. This will require artificial insemination. A scheme to carry out this plan is interrupted when a court declares Ted property, therefore also annulling his marriage. He

subsequently struggles in the court system to regain his status of personhood while also attempting to avoid being captured by a toy company, in which case he would be exploited as a replica.

2. Critique

The criteria for evaluating this film are as follows. Among the most important of these is the quality of the comedy, followed by the faithfulness of the sequel to the original Ted. The comedy is considered in terms of its general effect, its subject matter, significance and inventiveness. Bad marks are given for repetitiveness or unnecessary offense. It should be noted that comedy is essentially a subjective art and a means of relaying a society's values. Given this fact, one viewer's experience can be very different than another's. In addition, while some expressed values are admirable, others can border on the tasteless or exploitative. It is not difficult to see how Ted 2's formula would naturally lead to excessive vulgarities. If Ted's cuteness provides a grounding element to the humor in the movie, the tendency would be to create more and more bizarre circumstances in contrast to this. This is followed by a critique of the story and consideration for the extent to which the sequel was faithful to the original.

3. Evaluation

In comedic terms, this film can essentially be summed up by the contrast between Ted's inherent cuteness and his ongoing vulgarity. His coarse, rough-and-tumble, New Jersey accent is also emulated by most of the cast, leading to a more or less monotonous pace of dialogue, irrespective of how passionate the characters often are. Early on, repetitiveness issues also become clear when a formula emerges that consists of an increasingly raunchy set of dialogues and gross scenarios to fit into Ted's necessary 'cuteness contrast.' Given this fact, it becomes more and more clear that the movie's core comedic ideas would probably not have worked

without using Ted as a crutch. If the same or similar jokes were tried with live actors, the film likely would have fallen much more flat. Thus, Ted essentially becomes a kind of gimmick employed in order to justify lackluster plot and dialogue, given that the writing has difficulty standing on its own.

Issues were found with the plotting as well. Many of the more raunchy scenes, such as when Teddy finds transsexual male porn on John's computer, seem more or less spontaneous and random rather than well-fitted within the fabric of the story. When John's attraction to this porn is labeled a 'sickness,' the characters proceed to destroy his computer and hide its broken remnants underwater, stressing ad absurdum the terrible degree of wrongness discovered. This sets up an oft repeated irony of shock-jokes, many of them relating to sexuality, which are somewhat rich if not misplaced in the context of a story about a teddy bear that marries a full-grown woman.

It is interesting to note that the script takes on a sort of spontaneity that is commonly found in contemporary comedies where ultra-clever, witty dialogue is replaced with dialogue that is theoretically 'worse' yet realist in its more accurate depiction of what a character would be capable of conjuring up in the moment. Yet, in Ted 2 this seems more the result of its staff not having vetted the script, meaning that the simplicity of the characters is more the result of shortcomings in production than an intentional device. Among other reviewers, Foundas notes that Seth McFarlane may have stocked this film with too much B-material, especially given that its running time is nearly two hours (2015). Yet, it is limited on the high end too, as ultimate, deep 'belly laughs' remain limited. Therefore, reducing the film's length would have raised its quality-per-minute, but it wouldn't have necessarily made its few best moments any better.

Several reviewers take particular issue with the film's trivialization of civil rights, especially given the current context of race relations in the US (Collin). The court proceedings in the film seem even somehow less appropriate, given the presence of Morgan Freeman as a token black character whose presence almost seems an attempt to counteract any potential offense over this content (Kenny).

Furthermore, the author certainly did not interpret Ted's court involvement as mimicking legitimate human civil rights cases, in which case it would almost certainly mock them. However, this lack of humanity also seems to rob them of any meaningful symbolism. Ted's case may also seem especially lacking in merit, given his already troubled marriage. This seems to weaken the viewer's motive to want him to get children. In terms of its faithfulness to the first film, Ted 2 seems similar in mostly the superficial ways. The plot was almost certainly modified due to John's wife, actress Mila Kunis' declining to be involved with the project. Ostensibly, her profile has so risen since the release of the first film that she decided to steer clear of what could have been a risky sequel. Ultimately, that decision may have worked in her best interest.

4. Conclusion

This paper has addressed Ted 2 in a number of ways. First, it provided a brief synopsis. Then, it discussed the criteria by which the movie would be considered. First among these was the quality of the comedy as determined by several key issues. Then, it discussed the movie in terms of these criteria. Ultimately, while Ted 2 was entertaining, it certainly fell short of its predecessor. An excessive reliance on vulgarity and absurd circumstances as well as lackluster writing detracted from the experience. Ted 2 was, nonetheless, to be expected, given the success of the former movie. Perhaps McFarlane and company will take this format and attempt to further innovate for a sequel, if they can come up with a different, inventive idea.

Works Cited

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