

'Three Men' sequel predictable, likable comedy

By Julie Naughton
Senior Reporter

"Three Men and A Little Lady," the follow-up film to the hit "Three Men and A Baby," is a good, old-fashioned, no-brains-required comedy. More affable and likable than the first film (a rarity for sequels), "Three Men and A Little Lady" makes no bones about what it is, a mostly one-dimensional, sitcomish film, which adds to its considerable charm.

The film's opening shots show Mary, the "baby" of the first film and the "little lady" of this film, from babyhood to her present age. These scenes are shot in fast-forward and bring the audience up to date with Mary (Robin Weisman) and the horde

she lives with. Among the horde are Jack (Ted Danson), a slightly narcissistic actor and Mary's biological father; Peter (Tom Selleck), a shy, hands-off-me architect; Michael (Steve Guttenberg), a likeable political cartoonist; and

movie REVIEW

Mary's mother, Sylvia (Nancy Travis), a confused actress.

Although it's obvious from the beginning how this comedy will end up, director Emile ("Chances Are") Ardolino feels the need to drag the audience through a near-miss situation, the near-marriage of Sylvia to a completely obnoxious, two-faced British producer named Edward (Christopher Cazenove).

However, it's evident to the audience that Sylvia will marry Daddy X, whom she's always been in love with and whom Mary loves best. But even through the British mess, the comedy's charming style keeps the audience's interest.

There are wonderful comedic moments in this film. For instance, when Jack, Peter and Michael sing Mary to sleep with a rap lullaby called "The Marriage Rap," the audience erupted into hysterical laughter.

The ending is predictable, down to when Daddy X proclaims his love for Sylvia. His speech is nearly identical to Billy Crystal's "Why I love you" speech to Meg Ryan in "When Harry Met Sally" . . .

But what is contained between the

light beginning and predictable end is about two hours of carefree, enjoyable comedy.

Weisman, as Mary, is fresh and appealing, unlike many other big-screen tots of late. Weisman carries off the character with grace and charm, beguiling the audience with her love for her "three daddies" and her mother. "Three Men and A Little Lady's" probable success most likely will be largely due to the casting of the talented Weisman as Mary. With an unappealing child or a brat as Mary, this film easily could have fallen on its face.

Selleck, rebounding from his recent stinker, "Quigley Down Under," is his usual charismatic self in this film. His Gary Cooper-I-don't-talk-much manner, though sometimes annoying, works well in this film.

The only villain of the film, the smarmy Edward, is carried off well by Cazenove. Cazenove, perhaps best-known for his role on the nighttime soap "Dynasty," is the evil stepfather, intent on sending little Mary off to Pileforth Academy for Young Women, a weird English boarding school. He gets his — thank goodness — at the end.

Travis, as Sylvia, is somewhat wishy-washy about the man she wants to spend her life with. Is it him, or him . . . she keeps agonizing. The love Travis portrays for her film daughter is refreshing, however.

Guttenberg and Danson also turn in well-done performances.

This film actually is less fairy-

talish than the original; "Three Men and A Baby" was about finding a cute baby on a doorstep. "Three Men and A Little Lady" is about what happens after that cute little baby grows up. It shows realities of raising children, the day-to-day fights, different family situations

Don't go to this film expecting it to be a sequel to "The Unbearable Lightness of Being." Just enjoy the uncomplicated two hours of comedy it provides.

"Three Men and A Little Lady" is playing at the Douglas 3 Theatre, 1300 P St.



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old U.S. of A. She manages to get back to Scranton, Pa., but has troubles getting to Chicago.

One of the film's most hilarious moments comes when she hitches a ride from Scranton to Chicago in the back of a Budget Rent-a-Truck. She shares it with the pride of Sheboygan, Wis.: Gus and His Polka Band. This sets up the comedy between Gus (John Candy, in a riotous cameo) and Mom.

Mom spends the rest of the film trying to get home, while Kevin spends the rest of the film trying to make sure there will be a home to return to.

One of the most pleasant performances in this melee is turned in by Emmy-award winning writer O'Hara. O'Hara, co-creator of the show "SCTV" and a co-star in one of summer 1990's most charming films, "Betsy's Wedding," is thoroughly realistic as Kevin's frantic mother.

Culkin, as Kevin, is an adorable kid, but completely obnoxious. However, Hughes' script is so full of sight gags that the poor kid isn't given a chance to do anything except set up the violence against the burglars.

Heard, perhaps best-known to the general public as Bette Midler's husband in "Beaches," is extremely laid-back in this role. His character barely even gets ruffled when he realizes that his youngest kid is home alone in the Chicago suburbs. Even if his character hated the kid, a real parent probably would have shown a little more emotion when he realized his kid was alone.

And Pesci, a burglar who looks and acts like the Grinch who stole Christmas, is a real treat. His character isn't exactly a nice guy, but the character is a far cry from the evil gangster of "GoodFellas."

Despite all this, "Home Alone" is not a horrible film. It's a good take-your-kids-to-the-movies-at-Christmas-time film, devoid of bad language, guts and gore. However, it isn't destined to become a classic, so don't forget the real classics — "Miracle on 34th Street" and "It's a Wonderful Life" — this holiday season.

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