

Movie Review

New Releases

'EDtv' lacks depth, plot

By SAM MCKEWON
Senior editor



MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY and Woody Harrelson play the Perkurny brothers - Ed and Ray - in the new Ron Howard comedy centered on media invasion.

Inevitably, there will be comparisons between "EDtv," the new Ron Howard movie, and "The Truman Show," the brilliant, Academy-snubbed film with Jim Carrey.

Both are about men whose lives are on television, so the premise, ultimately, is the same. But that's where similarities end - especially the brilliant part.

"EDtv" is about Ed Pekurny (Matthew McConaughey), who lives in modern-day San Francisco. Ed is picked by a fictional network, headed by Whitaker (Rob Reiner) to be filmed 16 hours a day (minus 8 hours for sleeping) all the time, everywhere, save the bathroom. This is the brainchild of Cynthia (Ellen DeGeneres), a programmer at the network. It is a show.

Why do they pick Ed? Who knows. He's a boring video store clerk. He has nothing to say. He's not profound. Neither is his family nor any of his friends. Maybe Howard or the screenwriters, Babaloo Mandel and Lowell Ganz, thought it'd be funny for a loser to be on TV.

And, for awhile, it is. McConaughey's Ed is a shiftless but likable guy who wears hilarious Woody Broad shirts, and his brother, Ray (Woody Harrelson) is a stupid schemer artist with a nice girlfriend, Shari (Jenna Elfman). Ed's parents have their problems, as does his sister.

But what made Howard think this drama could last two hours? Apparently, not even Howard did, as we get numerous, lengthy shots of people around America watching the show. Are we supposed to get a thrill out of this? When Cynthia gets the biggest laughs simply because she played by DeGeneres, there's a big problem.

Eventually, Shari, who looks as though she's about to cry in every scene she's in, breaks up with Ray and goes with Ed. Then, she breaks up with Ed because he's on television all the time. She moves away. Maybe they'll get back together, maybe not.

What's a real shame is that to move this movie along, pointless plot elements are thrown in. Ed's real father (Dennis Hopper) comes back. The truth about Ed's mother (Sally Kirkland) is revealed. Ed shacks up with a gold-digger (Elizabeth Hurley). Some of it's funny, some of it isn't. Some of it's just

sad; you feel like these characters didn't deserve to be such nasty, cynical folks.

And that's all "EDtv" seems to be going for: laughs. It has a point, sure - that America is in love with fame, that we love to invade privacy. But we know that already. MTV's "The Real World" is all about that.

Imagine making a movie about such a show and how the person who was being filmed felt about it and the people who were making the show and what they felt. This is "EDtv."

And definition of irony: that Reiner's character pitches the show as uncut and not like a "Real World" show that's edited to eliminate boring content. But the movie's edited in just the same fashion.

Think about it, while Ed's at the video store for eight hours, are you going to watch? Would anyone? The idea of a show such as this would not fly. "The Truman Show" would because it's made up, events can be manipulated. Here, that can't happen.

The acting, besides DeGeneres, doesn't help. The whole Pekurny family's a bunch of boobs. Only Harrelson pulls it off well. McConaughey does not have a natural penchant for comedy. Elfman's pretty, but little more. And she's certainly not funny. How can she be if she cries half the movie?

Film Review

The Facts

Title: "EDtv"
Stars: Matthew McConaughey, Jenna Elfman, Woody Harrelson
Director: Ron Howard
Rating: PG-13 (adult language)
Grade: C
Five Words: "EDtv" hit and miss comedy

The end is a little more far-fetched than the rest of the movie. Reiner's character becomes a little like Ed Harris' Christof in "Truman," and instead of being haunting, it's just really annoying. Reiner can be like that.

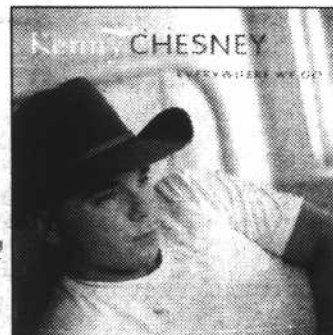
The killer is all those shots of America watching. Howard pounds this thought into the ground. He shows the same folks over and over again.

Eventually, "EDtv" winds up just about how you think it will. And what's there to say at the end of the TV day? That a partly funny movie needs a little more than one running gag to pull it through. That gag runs as hard as it can in this movie, but it won't ever finish a race.

Kenny Chesney
"Everywhere We Go"
BNA Records
Grade: B-

Evidently, Kenny Chesney doesn't see any reason to change his formula for success.

His country chart-toppers have always been love ballads, and his latest album, "Everywhere We Go," is chock-full of them.



Contrary to the first released single and the album's most up-tempo song, "How Forever Feels," Chesney presents six ballads, five of which have some kind of love theme.

That's half the tracks.

His only mistake comes in the one ballad that doesn't have to do with leaving a woman, staying with a woman, or coming back to a woman. It's a duet with Randy Travis.

Whoops. What prompts a relatively young country artist - who makes his living singing love ballads - to record a duet with Travis, the hands-down king of all country love ballads?

It may seem like a good idea in theory, but once Travis' low, perfectly defined voice belts into the second verse of "Baptism," it's pretty much all over for Chesney. By the end of the verse, one realizes that it may not be a bad idea for Chesney to stick to singing harmony.

Aside from "Baptism," Chesney offers a couple of solid love-ballad efforts along with a couple of love ballads that just kind of seem to blend in with the rest of them - you can't quite remember what they're about or how they go.

"You Had Me From Hello," co-written by Chesney, begins in typical Chesney fashion - with a piano intro. Lyrically, it is possibly the best song on the album, with the catch phrase coming from the movie "Jerry Maguire."

Other love ballads, such as "Life is Good" and "Everywhere We Go," lack the lyrics and distinctive melodies to make them memorable after the music stops.

"How Forever Feels," on the other hand, boasts distinctly rhythmic verses and a catchy chorus, despite pretty stupid lyrics. But sometimes stupid lyrics make the best country songs. Chesney tries his hand at stupid lyrics with "She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy," another up-tempo track.

For the most part, though, Kenny Chesney's fifth album - that's right, fifth - blends with the rest of his albums into one big lovey-dovey ballad-lover's delight.

His formula has been successful so far, but with "Everywhere We Go," Chesney may have taken this love ballad tripe a little too far.

- David Wilson

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