

'Keeping the Faith' 'cute' romance story but lacks in comedy

By Mike Callahan Jr.
Staff writer

You ever heard the one about the priest and the rabbi who fall in love with the same girl? To be honest, it's not

a bad story, just a half-hour too long. Edward Norton's directorial debut, "Keeping the Faith," in which he stars to boot, is a romantic comedy that is not inherently funny, but its handle on the romantic realm of things is admirable.

Jake (Ben Stiller) is a rabbi, and Brian (Norton) is a priest. The three have been best friends since their school days, when they both loved Anna (Jenna Elfman), who moved to California in their childhood and has come back to New York to see them.

The squad has some relationship issues. Jake is outlandishly picky when it comes to dating. When a Tae Bo-obsessed fitness freak, Ali (Lisa Edelstein), literally begs him, ridiculously, to spend the night, he rejects her. I don't blame him.

But when a hot ABC correspondent named Rachel (Rena Sofer) offers him the same sexy stuff, he denies her too — an offer 99 percent of the male population would give its remote for.

Despite their relationship intangibles, the film doesn't fool anybody. Both of these stand-up-comedian style preachers are falling for Anna.

Jenna Elfman steals the show with her cutesy, dimpled grin and woman-of-the-world front. But the film doesn't

REVIEW Keeping the Faith

STARS: Ben Stiller, Edward Norton, Jenna Elfman, Anne Bancroft, Eli Wallach, Milos Forman
DIRECTOR: Edward Norton
RATING: PG - 13 (language, crude humor, sexual content, brief nudity, wrestling violence)
GRADE: C
FIVE WORDS: Norton's not so funny faith



Courtesy photo

have realistic options. Either Anna chooses Jake or Brian or flies her workaholic self back to California.

The main problem with the film is it thinks it's funnier than it is. The main things that keeps interest levels from dwindling are the cute couple scenes between Anna and her choice of the two men. They're handled with a modern twist and seem more real than most romantic comedies' attempts at lovey-dovey stuff. No cheese.

Norton did a respectable job in his

freshman effort, although he needs to work on his drunken routine. (If you see the film you'll know what I mean.) And this is Stiller's best work to date.

So if you're at a bar and some guy goes, "Have you heard the one about the priest and the rabbi who fall in love with the same girl," at least you won't remember how long it took

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