

2021 blog post with the prompt “What’s the worst movie you’ve ever seen?”

550 word limit

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In terms of the worst movies I’ve seen in my sparse 20 years on this earth, I could rattle off a few obvious ones. *Zoolander 2* (2016) is a never-ending sequence of celebrity cameos held together solely by the strength of Ben Stiller’s sequel egomania. *Seoul Searching* (2015) is a failed depiction of a Korean-American summer camp, relying on antiblack gags and a *Grease* (1978)-aged cast. These are all Letterboxd entries I still glare at upon login.

But no, I am writing on *Did You Hear About The Morgans?* (2009).

If you haven’t heard of this movie, good, because that means you weren’t obsessively combing through Hugh Grant’s Wikipedia page. Hugh Grant plays lawyer Paul Morgan, who is also just Hugh Grant in every romcom – a slightly stilted and floppy British endearment. Sarah Jessica Parker plays his separated wife, career woman Meryl Morgan. In typical romcom ridiculousness, the Morgans must enter the Witness Protection Program and relocate to the small town of Ray, Wyoming. But despite the concept, it’s bracingly mediocre, and me even typing the lengthy title squanders valuable time, so I will now only refer to it by acronym – formal style be damned.

It’s not the most offensive film, nor is it the most visually unappealing film, but *DYHATM?* commits the worst sin of the 1.5-hour runtime romcom genre: the main pairing simply *exists*. Perhaps the casting directors had watched the superior Hugh Grant romcom *Notting Hill* (1999) shortly before pre-production and, hoping to capture the same commercial success, mistook Sarah Jessica Parker for her Hollywood doppelganger Julia Roberts – a case of mistaken identity that I often succumb to as well. But then again, I’m not the one delegating multi-million-dollar cinematic projects, and *DYHATM?*’s big ticket stars have the combined dynamic of two actors testing lines together; scenes are padded with Parker lecturing like a PTA mom, and Grant’s indomitable romcom identity comes off as exhausted routine.

And for all the lack of romance, there's also extremely little comedy. In fact, the most comedic moment isn't even between two human characters; it involves Hugh Grant facing off against a curious bear, a necessary preliminary for Grant's future acclaim in *Paddington 2* (2017). Some salvageable laughs arise unintended from the low-budget set design: a bulk store named Bargain Barn still clearly retains the entryway booths of the base Costco. I suppose that there's also the quirkiness of seeing Grant and Parker modeling regular cowboy hats. The intended jokes, however, try to cash in on the juxtaposition between a conservative town and the Manhattan career couple. For example, The Morgans go to a late-night diner and are confronted with a stodgy bearded grandpa, who warns that the God-fearing conservatives of the town keep record of the very few liberal-minded inhabitants. With the all-white cast, however, these jokes just don't land and exist solely for the sake of fulfilling the latter half of the romcom marketing label.

Sometimes movies can be so bad they're good, featuring some memorably horrible scene for late-night Discord ranting with your friends. But the worst transgression is a movie that simply exists as cash-grab fodder, or a movie that just wastes your time. *DYHATM?* is unfortunately both.