

It's Complicated

The new comedy from filmmaker Nancy Meyer, "It's Complicated," proves a thoroughly enjoyable romp with Meryl Streep and Alec Baldwin as a long-divorced couple who, against all odds, have a fling together, throwing their lives into a tizzy. The affair between Jane (Streep) and Jake (Baldwin) is further complicated because the latter has remarried trophy wife Agness (Lake Bell) with a pesky young son. Steve Martin, as Adam, an architect working on Jane's house, and the couple's three children and potential son-in-law Harley (John Krasinski) leaven the mix nicely.

Meyer ("The Holiday," "Something's Gotta Give") also wrote the witty screenplay, which offers some wry set-ups, such as Jane and Jake's drunken re-connection, and Jane and Adam's encounter with some potent weed. No scene is more hilarious than a climatic one involving Jane, Adam, and Jake on two communicating lap-tops. I doubt there has been any other Skype exchange as randy—and funny.

The film is hardly flawless. Any number of stereotyped elements are present from other comedies set in La-la Land. Taking place in a sun-lit Santa Barbara, the film's décor and housing is pure Architectural Digest; Jane's restaurant/bakery is more movie set than believable eatery. Then there is the well-trod theme of the lonely single woman (Streep) who must have girl talk with three of her best, witty friends, all ready to talk openly of their sex lives. Missing, I must admit, is the standard African-American confidante for the leads...

The joy in "It's Complicated" is in watching old pros of a certain age go through their paces. Streep as the befuddled Jane is at her comedic best, as just a contemporary woman who has, yes, adjusted to her divorced state, only to have her comfortable rug pulled out from under. Her infectious laughter punctuates the film, half of it expressed in delight and half of it coming from embarrassment. She handles both splendidly.

Baldwin, as kind of a roué light, cheats with abandon yet charm, evidencing that, while he is out for his own (sexual) pleasure, he still truly feels for his lovely ex. As he does so well on TV's "30 Rock," Baldwin turns on a dime from smooth operator to harassed victim and pulls it off. Steve Martin's characterization here is the more modest of the three, but his more measured, tentative Adam plays nicely against his more vivid co-stars.

Let's say all three engage in a delightful exercise of foreplay, interplay, and afterplay.

("It's Complicated" is rated "R" and runs 120 minutes.)

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