

## Double Happiness

*Double Happiness* is the first feature film of young Chinese-Canadian director Mina Shum and a fine debut it is. In part autobiographical, the film looks at young Jade Li (Sandra Oh) at a crucial cusp in her life. A 22-year-old aspiring actress, she is torn between the traditional expectations of her close-knit family (especially her opinionated dad, Stephen Chang) and a work- and love-life outside the Chinese community in Vancouver. While suffering the resolute matchmaking of her family, she develops a relationship with a white university student Mark (Callum Rennie). This film's wistfulness is aptly described by its director, who remarked in an interview that "the family is your first love, and thus ultimately they must be your first heartbreak."

The dilemmas here are familiar from other Chinese-American filmmaking (Wayne Wang's *Dim Sum* and *The Joy Luck Club*, Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* and *Eat Drink Man Woman*), but the difference here is Sandra Oh's singular performance. She is terrific as the combination of dutiful daughter and latent rebel. She is also funny, tailoring her delivery to match director Shum's smart script. I was reminded of Robert Townsend's debut film *Hollywood Shuffle* as Jade Li struggles to make it in show biz. Doing her own kind of "Vancouver Shuffle," Ms. Oh auditions hilariously for a bit part as a waitress in a TV film. In another scene, readying for one of her parents' manufactured "dates," she gazes at her mirror image in a lemon-yellow shift and cracks: "I look like Conny Chung" --a line both self-deprecating and literally correct.

There are other worthy things in this picture, among them a convincing impersonation of Dad Li by Mr. Chang, a veteran kung fu master in his first non-martial arts role. He is every strict father that ever tried to rule over an unruly Asian family, yet he has one deliciously silly moment when he delivers a nutty rendition of "MacArthur Park" at a karaoke bar. A smart and knowing little movie, *Double Happiness* delivers grins and giggles, as well as a late-blooming tear. (*"Double Happiness"* is rated PG-13.)

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