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MARKETPLACE

What Love Is

Written by Jim Howard, Jr.
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Sony Pictures Home Entertainment / 2007 / 88 Minutes / R
 Street Date: April 1, 2008

It's Valentine's Day and Tom (Cuba Gooding, Jr.) has big plans. He's about to get engaged and has planned a surprise party to share the good news with friends. But things take a turn for the worse... Tom returns home only to discover his girlfriend has packed up and left him. Now, instead of a surprise party, the surprise is on Tom. Fortunately, his friends - and a group of beautiful women - are there to help him make sense of it all in this bold romantic comedy about men, women and that crazy little thing called love.

Made in 2006 and having a limited theatrical release in March of 2007, this dream project for writer/director/co-star Mars Callahan started ten years ago as a play, and hence most of the movie is filmed in Tom's living room with a tremendous degree of dialogue. The quick-conversation delivery in Howard Hawks' *His Girl Friday* (1940) was a great inspiration to Callahan and affected the dialogue style placed into *What Love Is*.



During the first act of the film the rapid-fire talking is almost non-stop, and the actors make the most of it as they swing up and down on the emotional content of their lines. The men cuss and discuss how they handle relationships with women. Tom's friends include a brash playboy (Matthew Lillard), a shy tree-hugger (Sean Astin), a content married friend (Mars Callahan), and a gay friend (Andrew Daly). Some of their theories

are hilarious but most are relevant to what many real-world guys think.

The second act introduces the women and their ideas about men and relationships. And the third act naturally brings them all together, which is when the film gets more interesting, because theories are put to the test. Trying to make sense of it all, Tom continues to agonize about what to do and how to handle his fiancée when she comes back for her remaining, packed suitcases.

With all of the intense debates, suggestions (most of which have surprising merit), and his reeling emotions, Tom's mind seems to be in a blender, but incurably likeable actor Cuba Gooding, Jr. is in excellent form as he swings from theory to theory. And the variety of the cast (including Gina Gershon, Anne Heche and Tamala Jones) truly shines with strong personalities battling out their own theories against one another.

Mars Callahan's film is well-realized and he should be proud. This is a great film that sadly received a low profile introduction to the public last year. Yes, the talk is pervasively raunchy and the quick-cut editing can be wild, but these Los Angeles folk cover a lot of ground about the harsh realities of relationships that can be both thought-provoking and hilarious.

Don't be fooled by the wickedly cheesy coverart: this is a great ensemble film with great actors and a solid production. Check it out sometime.

The Video: How Does The Disc Look?

The film's theatrical aspect ratio of 1.85:1 is presented in anamorphic video. This film was shot digitally and is without blemishes; and if this transfer is sourced from a film print (made from the digital files), the print is pristine. Most of the film was produced in a studio and the controlled lighting leaves the colors terrifically saturated. The interiors of Tom's house are painted in deep green colors with moody lighting and they are very well rendered, as are the hardwood floors.

ADDITIONAL INFO



DISC FEATURES

- Specifications
- DVD
- Dual-Layer Disc
- Region 1

Aspect Ratio(s):
 1.85:1



- Dolby Digital Formats:
- English 5.1

- DTS Formats:
- None

- PCM Formats:
- None

- Subtitles/Captions:
- English Closed Captions
- English Subtitles
- Spanish Subtitles

- Standard Features:
- Interactive Menus
- Scene Access

- Supplements:
- Featurette
- Commentary
- Trailer

- DVD-ROM Features:
- None

List Price:
 - \$24.96

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VIDEO	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
AUDIO	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
EXTRAS	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
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Fleshtones of the different skin tones in this film are well balanced and appear very natural. Edge halos are not apparent and there are no compression problems. Parts of Tom's room are very shadowy, and there are times that blacks would fade a tad. The contrast appeared barely crush blacks on the bottom end from time to time. But the grayscale is generally solid with reasonable small object detail. Many close ups of the actors also reveal very good fine textures in their facial features and clothing. This is a solid transfer from the digitally recorded source.

The Audio: How Does The Disc Sound?

The disc includes a Dolby Digital 5.1 track. Not much is very exciting or involving with this mix. The dynamic range is average and clean, and the all-important dialogue is very well recorded. Music from the dreamy strippers scene and the music from Dee Lite's famous "Groove is in the Heart" hit song sound best. Some bottom end is surprising when a bass effect is used after a dramatic moment as it awakens the sub woofer nicely, though this only happens about three times. Surround use is one of the weakest I've ever heard for a contemporary 5.1 mix; discrete *anything* is a joke because there is almost nothing there. Granted, this is a dialogue-heavy film that was first intended to be a play, but couldn't the sound engineers have been a bit more creative (even just with room acoustics and ambient reflections)?

No other audio track is included. English Closed Captions and subtitles in English and Spanish are included.

Supplements: What Goodies Are There?

First up is a *laissez faire* **audio commentary** with writer/director/co-star Mars Callahan, and producers George Bours and John Hermansen. It's true that this film is low-profile and low budget, and the film makers talk about some interesting trivia about the making of the film and the actors. But no one seems too excited about anything; early into the commentary, one of the guys simply says, "can't we just sit back and watch this [instead of doing an audio commentary]?" So it's a missed opportunity to talk about such an ambitious and challenging project. I guess they just wanted to act cool or something. What gives?

More organized and insightful is the **featurette** *Making Love: The Making-of What Love Is* (22 minutes). Film makers and much of the cast discuss the hard work of the film and its genesis, including the entire film being shot in 9 days and many removable walls for different camera angles. Some great behind-the-scenes are included such as the set's building process. But beware; the movie's climax - Tom's lightbulb moment - is also included here. This seems highly irresponsible, but in any event, do yourself a favor and watch this featurette *after* watching the film.

Trailers include a promo on Blu-ray Disc, *Untraceable*, *First Sunday*, *Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*, *Cleaner*, *The Good Night*, *Revolver*, *The Final Season*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Jerry Maguire*, *Three Can Play That Game* and *88 Minutes*.

The 88-minute film is organized into thirty-two chapters.

Exclusive DVD-ROM Features: What happens when you pop the disc into your PC?

There are no DVD-ROM features on this DVD.

Final Thoughts

Raunchy, quick dialogue gets to this point in this comedy about men and women managing their relationships and sex lives. Great actors make this entertaining, though they go over the top on occasion with mixed but generally good results. The picture quality is solid, the audio is very bland, and a few supplements are decent. This isn't a bad choice for a rental, though it might warrant repeat viewing for the simple fact of the sheer volume of dialogue delivered like an AK-47 machine gun.

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