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Love Happens - Review

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Length: 116 min
 Rated: PG-13
 Distributor: [Universal Pictures](#)
 Release Date: 2009-09-18

Starring: [Jennifer Aniston](#), [Aaron Eckhart](#), Sasha Alexander, Martin Sheen, Judy Greer, Dan Fogler

Directed by [Brandon Camp](#)
 Produced by [Scott Stuber](#), [Mary Parent](#), [Mike Thompson](#)
 Written by [Brandon Camp](#), [Mike Thompson](#)

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Reviewed by [Perri Nemiroff](#) : 2009-09-18 01:37:34



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Let's play a game: pretend I'm Jennifer Aniston's agent. No more romantic comedies! Cue the cheers and applause. There's a reason people keep turning out for her films, they like her. When you've got moviegoers pulling for you, they'll stick with you no matter what. Why not take some chances and diversify your repertoire a bit? Between the trailer, the poster and the film's title, it's obvious that *Love Happens* finds Aniston nestled safe and sound in her usual lady-with-love-problems role. Aaron Eckhart in full Two-Face costume couldn't even spice this one up.

Instead, Eckhart looks as pretty as ever as Burke Ryan, the author of a popular self-help book holding a grief seminar in

Seattle. Burke effortlessly coaches his devoted attendees but deep down, still anguishes over his own loss.

Eloise is a simple woman living her dream running her own flower shop. In her free time she enjoys collecting particularly poignant cards people include with their bouquets and scribbling strange words like 'quidnunc' and 'poppsmic' behind the paintings in the halls of the hotel in which Burke is holding his seminar. For every romantic comedy Aniston stars in, a Judy Greer plays the eccentric sidekick. In this case Greer is Marty, Eloise's employee and friend always on hand to give useless love life advice.

In typical meet-cute fashion, Burke and Eloise wind up literally bumping into each other in the hotel hall. I've heard about playing hard to get, but deaf? Yes, for no reason at all, except maybe to get a cheap laugh, she plays deaf and makes Burke feel awkward. He eventually catches Eloise chatting it up with a hotel employee and gets his revenge by calling her out on her lie. Sadly, the joke's on us and this gets the ball rolling on the tacky relationship development we know is coming.

Love Happens suffers from an identity crisis. Many are under the impression that it's a romantic comedy but it's labeled as a romantic drama. It's almost as if writer/director Brandon Camp approached the project as if it were a rom-com, but at the last moment switched gears and gave it a more serious tone. No matter which way you approach this film, it still doesn't work.

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First off, it's not funny. Camp and co-writer Mike Thompson struggle to get a laugh throughout the majority of the film. Even Dan Fogler, who plays Burke's manager and is normally keen to provide a chuckle, comes across as dry and humorless. In the final half hour of the [film](#), comic relief is finally provided by the film's most engaging character, Rocky the bird. In fact, the funniest moment of the film is the final scene, which features Rocky having a laugh with Burke's father-in-law (Martin Sheen).

Secondly, *Love Happens* is completely consumed by the whole grief-counseling element, so much so that it becomes a drag. A significant portion of the film is devoted to Burke's care of one man, Walter (John Carroll Lynch), who's having a particularly hard time letting go of his son. Yes, there's something about Walter that's endearing, but audiences aren't looking to shed a tear at the expense of a heart-wrenching story. Romantic movies are supposed to be heart-warming and make you choke up at the end only when the guy and girl live happily ever after.

Regardless of whether or not Burke and Eloise make it to that point, you won't well up because their happiness is unjustified. The romantic element takes a back seat to melodrama. They go from the awkward first date to sharing their darkest secrets. There isn't even a fast-paced montage showing the progression of their relationship; you're just expected to accept they've gotten to the point they're at. A little chemistry might have helped, but there isn't any, at least not between Aniston and Eckhart anyway.

I don't care what IMDB says; *Love Happens* is a romantic comedy. It's not a good one, but it's definitely a romantic comedy. If Camp wants to insist it's a romantic drama, fine, but then it's an unintentionally humorous romantic drama. Whatever way you look at it, *Love Happens* doesn't work. You're not going to giggle, your heart won't be warmed and ultimately, you'll leave unsatisfied.

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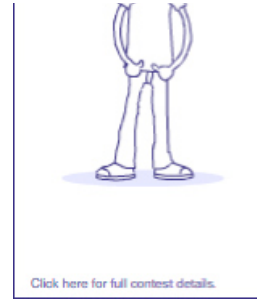
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