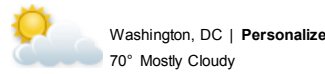


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Posted at 05:01 PM ET, 05/13/2011

Why you absolutely must see 'Bridesmaids'

By Alexandra Petri



Please, please see this movie. (Universal Pictures)

Bridesmaids is sure to be an instant classic.

And you know Mark Twain's definition of classic — a book men praise and don't read.

The level of obligation I feel to see "Bridesmaids," the Judd Apatow film starring Kristen Wiig that opens today is getting to the point where if any of my relatives announced that he or she were planning to die, I'd have to demur. "Can you reschedule?" I'd say. "I have to see 'Bridesmaids' on its opening weekend or women won't ever make it in comedy."

At least this is what I have been informed is at stake. In the months leading up to this film, I have read more articles than you could shake a stick at (well, not a really large stick, anyway) saying that You Must Go See "Bridesmaids" Or They'll Shoot All the Lady Screenwriters. I hope that's not true. I have a screenplay in my drawer that I sometimes whip out and brandish at people if I sense that the evening has gotten too enjoyable.

But everyone has been praising the film so highly that I've become terrified. "Stop it!" I want to yell at all the critics. "Why don't you go lavish these plaudits on 'Jumping The Broom?'" Nothing says, "Almost no one will see this movie" like "It is receiving uniform critical acclaim."

Besides, by all reasonable yardsticks "Bridesmaids" should not be a groundbreaking movie. It's a belly-laugh-ridden comedy that revolves around a wedding.

It's got a great cast. It's got, apparently, a great script.

But somehow we're writing about it like it might have the capacity to cure polio. This movie is like the sun on Venus in that Ray Bradbury story: It comes out only once every seven years, and if you miss it, your life will be dented.

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Maybe the fact that we're greeting it like the Second Coming says more about our cultural landscape than we'd like. There exists something called the [Bechdel Test](#) for movies, asking the question of whether there are two named female characters who talk to each other about something other than a man. Surprisingly few movies pass this test, and it's 2011!

There is an interesting piece by [Jennifer Kesler](#) arguing that people are actively discouraging scripts from passing the Bechdel test:

*Finally, I got one blessedly telling explanation from an industry pro: "The audience doesn't want to listen to a bunch of women talking about whatever it is women talk about."*

*"Not even if it advances the story?" I asked. That's rule number one in screenwriting, though you'd never know it from watching most movies: every moment in a script should reveal another chunk of the story and keep it moving.*

*He just looked embarrassed and said, "I mean, that's not how I see it, that's how they see it."*

*Right. A bunch of self-back-slapping professed liberals wouldn't want you to think they routinely dismiss women in between writing checks to Greenpeace. Gosh, no — it was they. The audience . . . They were making us do this awful thing. They, the man behind the screen. They, the six-foot-tall invisible rabbit.*

It's not that We Don't Want This. It's that They don't — whoever this nebulous They happens to be. Tina Fey suggests that [this famously dismissive They comes down to money](#): There'd be more movies about real women if more women paid for tickets at the box office. Otherwise, we're stuck with more films of Megan Fox Running in Heels While Things Explode.

So if you don't want that, you'd better see "Bridesmaids." Opening weekend. Eight times. Think of what's at stake: not Nebulous Woman-Power-Related Things, but Fewer Movies You Absolutely Won't Want to See.

That way, the next time a Movie With and About Women comes out, we won't have to feel guilty about not going.

By [Alexandra Petri](#) | 05:01 PM ET, 05/13/2011

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