

## 'The Proposal' – a comedic offer that shouldn't be refused

Contributed by Tim Riley  
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### THE PROPOSAL (Rated PG-13)

From my unbiased perspective, there have been too many chick flicks this year. That's probably why 'The Hangover' became a box office success, fueled by the attendance of guys longing for something to call their own.

Needless to say, it was with some trepidation that I approached the romantic comedy 'The Proposal,' fearing that it would be just another in a long line of barely tolerable gender-oriented entertainments.

Happily, I can report that my apprehension was misplaced, as 'The Proposal' turns out to be one of the more enjoyable comedies, even if it is appropriately categorized in the chick flick genre.

My faith in the talented Sandra Bullock, who's starred in a few duds recently, has been restored, now that she's back in the comedy mode.

If you've forgotten her comedic charm, just recall some oldies like 'Two Weeks Notice' and 'Miss Congeniality.'

She really needs her magic this time to play the part of tyrannical New York book editor Margaret Tate. Bullock's Margaret is the type of office barracuda that has staff literally diving for cover under their desks. The high-powered, domineering book editor channels Meryl Streep's role of the overbearing fashion editor in 'The Devil Wears Prada.'

A most unfortunate underling in Margaret's executive domain is greatly put-upon assistant Andrew Paxton (Ryan Reynolds), who has suffered her torments for three years only because he has ambition to succeed in the cutthroat publishing world.

Unexpectedly, opportunity looms for Andrew, though it is hardly something for him to relish.

Apparently, Margaret was so preoccupied with advancing her career and torturing subordinates that she overlooked the small matter of securing her immigration status. When she learns that she faces nearly immediate deportation to her native Canada, Margaret abruptly declares to her superiors, and in front of the unsuspecting Andrew, that they are engaged to be married.

As to be expected, Andrew is not too thrilled with this turn of events, but since he's young and motivated he agrees to participate in the charade on a few conditions.

Margaret and Andrew quickly learn from an officious immigration officer (Denis O'Hare) that the penalty for a phony marriage is stiff. Of course, this ups the ante, because Andrew not only wants to be an editor, he has a manuscript waiting to be published.

There will be no time for a whirlwind romance for this unlikely couple, as they both agree that a quick divorce is in the offing. Part of the bargain is that the odd couple has to travel to a remote part of Alaska for Andrew's family celebration of his Grandma Annie's (Betty White) 90th birthday bash.

Margaret, the always-in-control big city girl, finds herself in one comedic fish-out-of-water situation after another. The Paxton family practically owns the town, and Andrew's parents, Joe and Grace (Craig T. Nelson and Mary Steenburgen), are quirky characters, which seems the norm for remote Alaskan towns. Still, Joe resents that Andrew rejected the family business and is dubious about the older woman in his son's life.

The fun part is that the tables are turned on Margaret when the love/hate couple is on Andrew's turf. The uptight city gal doesn't quite know what to make of the extremely laid-back attitude of the locals.

As an unrepentant workaholic, Margaret doesn't manage too well when her cell phone becomes inoperable or when she can't find her sea legs on a speed boat. Stumbling around on boat docks is not too great in high heels.

One of the many funny scenes is when Annie and Grace take Margaret on a ladies outing, which happens to be the local tavern that features the pudgy, expressive Ramone (Oscar Nunez) as an unlikely Chippendale dancer.

Though unable or unwilling to escape the comfortable predictability of a romantic comedy involving polar opposites, 'The Proposal' scores as a very funny and appealing exercise in conventional storytelling.

Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds are perfectly paired as the odd couple, as her chilly behavior gradually evolves while his deadpan comedic delivery never flags. Delicious chemistry is at work between them, and as a result 'The Proposal' is a comedic offer you shouldn't refuse.

### DVD RELEASE UPDATE

Since we are on the subject of comedy this week, I guess I will make a shameless plug for the DVD release of 'The Pink Panther 2.'

I loved most, if not all, of the Peter Sellers original films as the blundering French police officer, Inspector Jacques Clouseau. Then, along came some eminently forgettable sequels starring people other than Sellers, names I cannot recall at the moment.

But then, comedian Steve Martin has revived the franchise with his own spin on the clueless detective, and so the last two 'Pink Panther' films have become irresistible.

'The Pink Panther 2' involves a thief known as 'The Tornado' who steals a variety of precious treasures, including the pink panther diamond.

An international dream team of detectives bands together to crack the case, but they are slowed down by Clouseau,

who has the propensity to miss the obvious until he somehow stumbles on the truth.

&ldquo;The Pink Panther 2&rdquo; DVD has the usual bonus features.

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