

“Anger Management”

Adam Sandler made one of the best movies of last year in “Punch Drunk Love.” It helped many of us better understand the characters he has played in his other movies. It also gave him a wonderful opportunity to say goodbye to those characters and branch out into new roles.

Sadly, Sandler has resumed making movies with the same old character at the center.

“Anger Management” tells the story of Dave Buznik (Sandler), an underachiever who mindlessly serves his boss on unrealized promises of advancement. Dave is in love with Linda, whose old flame delights in giving Dave grief.

On a flight to Pittsburgh, Dave has a misunderstanding with a flight attendant (please don’t call them “stewardesses”) and is “tazed” by an air marshal. Dave wakes up to find himself in front of a judge, who sentences him to anger-management therapy.

In therapy he meets Dr. Buddy Rydell (Jack Nicholson) and finds that he may have real anger issues. Rydell says there are two types of anger: explosive and implosive. Dave has implosive anger issues, evidenced by his various ticks and inability to sit still. But he denies the problem.

Then another outrageous event prompts the judge to rule that Rydell has to become Dave’s live-in anger therapist. Rydell has some radical ideas about dealing with anger, and Dave tries to get Rydell out of his life as quickly as possible.

The movie is hardly plausible and requires lots of emotional currency to buy the premise. And the final plot twist, which explains why Dave has had to go through this existential hell of a life, is the most difficult narrative pill to swallow.

The few humorous moments center on Nicholson’s Rydell. Much of what is

intended to be funny is very broad, but I found that some of the narrower humor attempts were much funnier. But compared to Nicholson's body of work, this is not his best performance by a long shot.

"Anger Management" continues Sandler's sad tradition of films like "Little Nicky" and last summer's "Mr. Deeds." As funny as Sandler can be (as seen in some of his "Saturday Night Live" work), one hopes that he will eventually add something besides "Punch Drunk Love" to his creditable body of work.

This movie does nothing to illuminate the anger that many feel, nor does it say much about the process its title speaks of. All it does is give Sandler a chance to hire his friends and deliver the same catch-phrases from his earlier movies.

"Anger Management" misses the mark in many ways.

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MPAA Rating: PG-13 on appeal for crude sexual content and language (previously rated R)

Director: Peter Segal

Writer: David Dorfman

Cast: Dr. Buddy Rydell: Jack Nicholson; Dave Buznik: Adam Sandler; Linda: Marisa Tomei; Galaxia: Woody Harrelson; Arnie Shankman: John C. Reilly.