

# Smith scores again with dating comedy

By Kam Williams  
Sentinel-Voice

Alex Hitchens (Will Smith) wrote the book when it comes to romance.

And, for a considerable fee, this self-styled date doctor will secretly counsel any bashful bachelor about how to woo the woman of his dreams.

Hitch, in fact, has been so successful that his advice comes with a money-back guarantee that any client will get his girl in three dates or less.

Albert Brennaman (Kevin James), on the other hand, is an overweight, awkward nerd who is smitten with Allegra Cole (Amber Valletta), a svelte, stunningly-beautiful, New York celebuntante.

The only reason Albert and Allegra's paths even cross is that he is an accountant with the firm that manages her money, but the pampered heiress is yet to notice the pencil-pushing wallflower.

Of course it comes as no surprise that Al, the geek, might be referred to Al, the player, for assistance in attracting Al, the female.

The interplay among this trio of Al's lies at the center of "Hitch," a mindless makeover movie that turns out to be far funnier than anything this critic expected.

After all, it was just last year that Jamie Foxx and Peter MacNicol mined the same sort of material in "Breakin' All the Rules," another buddy adventure about a suave, sophisticated Black dude taking a dorky White loser at love under his wing.

The good news is that "Hitch," if anything, has improved on the familiar formula, primarily because its lead actors, Will Smith (of "The Fresh Prince") and Kevin James (of "The King of Queens") are seasoned TV stars and whose breezy brand of comedy translates easily into this sitcom style vehicle. Plus, they seem to have a genuine affinity for working off each other and that chemistry is readily apparent on screen.

While the front story revolves around the question of whether Albert will develop enough cool to land Allegra and her millions, the back story reveals Hitch to have some relationship issues of his own to resolve. For, while he has a great track record when it comes to assisting others, he still has failed to find Ms. Right for



Will Smith and Eva Mendes provide the sexual tension in the hilarious date movie "Hitch."

himself.

We get a hint of what's to come early on, after his heart skips a beat when he spots sexy Sarah Melas (Eva Mendes) sitting across a dark room in a Manhattan pick-up bar. What Hitch doesn't know is that Sarah is a gossip columnist and assigned to dig up dirt on Allegra.

This is the first of an astounding number of coincidences per minute in a picture where New York seems to have a population of about

800 instead of 8 million.

So long as you are willing to check your brain at the box-office and overlook an improbable and transparent plot, then you're likely to find yourself laughing at more of the sort of antics you've undoubtedly seen in all the commercials.

There's Hitch having an allergic reaction to shellfish, or accidentally knocking Sarah off a Jet Ski. There's spastic Albert learning to dance, or sharing a homophobic

moment after practicing kissing, etcetera. A flick which breaks no new ground is, yet somehow, still funny enough to remain highly recommended.

This is the fifth straight No. 1 debut for Smith, following "Shark Tale," "I, Robot," "Bad Boys II," and "Men in Black II." Those movies all opened in the \$46 million to \$52 million range.

Excellent (3.5 stars). Rating: PG-13 for profanity and plenty of sexual references.



## ASK DEANNA! Real People, Real Advice

Ask Deanna! Is an advice column known for its fearless approach to reality-based subjects!

Dear Deanna!

I broke up with this girl two years ago. We both moved on but now we've started talking as friends. During this time she had a baby by someone else. I have a girlfriend but I take care of this baby as if it's mine. My ex calls me sometimes and other times she curses me and dogs me out but I don't say anything. I still have feelings for her as if I want to be with her. What should I do?

Help Me Out  
Toledo, OH

Dear Help:

If you want to be a wimpy man with no backbone keep doing what you're doing. Otherwise, you need to decide if you're going to stay with the woman you're with or go back to your ex for more punishment. It's good you're helping with the baby, but you need to free yourself. You broke up with this woman for a reason and considering how she treats you nothing has changed. Therefore son, you need to "man up" and keep it moving.

★★★★★

Dear Deanna!

I'm expecting my boyfriend to propose for Valentine's Day. If not, I'll take my chances and propose to him instead. We've been together for 5 years and have 2 kids together. I cook, clean and sacrifice for him and feel I should have the title of wife. I know he has commitment issues, but is it wrong for me to set an ultimatum?

Vita Jones  
Queens, NY

Dear Vita:

God didn't put you here to wear the title of "Miss Fool." You should've given your ultimatum before your first child was born. If he hasn't proposed by now, Valentine's Day won't make a difference. Make your commitment desires known and stress the importance of setting a manly example for his kids. If he doesn't do the right thing after 2 kids you're stuck in fornication and only you can decide to stay or set yourself free.

★★★★★

Dear Deanna!

My friend and I decided to share an apartment. In living together I've discovered things about her I don't like. She's dirty and lies about not having her bill money. After six months, I asked her to clean the tub and she got defensive and more so when I asked her man to take out the trash. She shops and dines every day but I'm on a budget. I feel like I'm being used and I'm stuck because her mom watches my son. I don't want this friendship anymore. Should I feel this way?

Anonymous  
Online E-Mail

Dear Anonymous:

You're being used like toilet paper. Male or female, you see a person in their true light when living with them. Evict your nasty friend immediately and find a roommate to rent her room. Don't let the relationship with her mom be an excuse. You can always find someone else to help with your son. The aggravation and stress isn't worth it. Again, give her the boot.

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## The Face of the Federal Budget



By  
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President,  
National  
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We need  
to invest  
in children  
Today!



NATIONAL  
EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION  
nea.org  
Great Public Schools  
for Every Child  
NEA's 2.7 million  
members are the  
nation's leading  
advocates for  
children and  
public education

It's budget time again in Washington, with bureaucrats and pundits talking about millions and billions of dollars with glib sound bites and snap judgments about what it all means.

What they don't talk about is how people's lives are affected — all from the alteration of a single number in a single column in those reams of paper.

As educators, who work in publicly funded schools every day, we know too well how those columns can change the lives of the children we teach. The change of a five to a zero can mean even more students in an already-crowded classroom, or another year with the same 10-year-old textbooks. It can mean that a much needed reading aide won't be around next semester or that the weekly music class is cancelled.

The 2.7 million members of the National Education Association are forced to deal with those changes every year. For the past few years, it hasn't been easy. Every day I hear from teachers and school employees all over the country about how those seemingly harmless numbers end up hurting the children they care about so much.

I know that this doesn't sound like the same budget we have been hearing about this week in the news.

The Administration will argue that education wasn't cut as much as other domestic issues, but the level of requirements won't be reduced either. Is this really the standard we should have for America's most important resource?

As the budget debate continues, teachers, school employees and parents want policymakers to remember this: It's not just how much federal money is invested in our schools, but how it is invested.

For America to succeed in the future, we must invest in children today. That means putting resources in the classroom. That's where children learn.