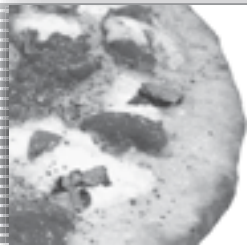


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Stephen Mangan and Meredith MacNeil in *Confetti*

WEDDED BLISS

Confetti

review by M. Faust

Put Mike Leigh, the creator of such singular British dramas as *Naked* and *Vera Drake*, to work on a Christopher Guest film and the result would probably resemble this outrageous but ultimately good-natured British comedy about the extremes people can go to for the wedding of their dreams. Like Guest (*Best in Show*, *Waiting for Guffman*), filmmaker Debbie Isitt assembled a cast of British comedians skilled in improvisation. But she goes him one better by adapting Leigh's famed method of leading his cast through workshops and then sending them out into the real world to face situations as their characters might.

The difference is that where Leigh uses these exercises as a beginning point for devising a script, Isitt never wrote a script at all; the entire film was improvised by the cast, with the director (who has extensive background in the theater) doing no more than offering the occasional nudge to alter the direction of a particular scene. Which is not to say that she got off the hook easily: It took her and her editor a year to whittle down the finished movie from 150 hours of filmed improvisations. (If the film is as big a hit as it deserves to be, the possibilities for DVD extras are frightening.)

The framework for *Confetti* involves a contest staged by a British bridal magazine of the same name, to select "the year's most original wedding." Couples are invited to submit their ideas for their

dream wedding, of which the magazine will stage three. Using the documentary style so familiar from dozens of reality television shows, the three couples are followed as they develop their "special days" with the aid of a pair of wedding planners, all the while struggling to maintain their dreams in the face of budgetary constraints, less than helpful relatives, and *Confetti's* refusal to allow nudity in its pages. (*Confetti* the magazine, that is; *Confetti* the movie has no such compunctions.)

To say more would be to ruin a lot of the fun to be had from the movie. Most American audiences will recognize few if any of the players (Martin Freeman from *The Office* and Leigh veteran Alison Steadman are probably the best known), which works to *Confetti's* advantage—it's easier to accept them as the characters they've created when you don't have a preconceived notion of the performers.

Best of all, Isitt and her cast have crafted these people with more affection than Guest has ever displayed in his films, which tend to be filled with mean caricatures. There are just as many laughs, but in the end all of these people get more or less what they wanted, and while the climactic weddings are silly they're also surprisingly delightful. **av**

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