

## Will You Love the Coopers?

By Paula Tudor

If you are looking to catch a warm, fuzzy Christmas movie at the theater this holiday season, you might want to save your hard-earned money and watch the Hallmark channel instead. There are few Christmas-themed movies coming out this year, particularly for the whole family. Love the Coopers looked like the best bet. The trailer made it seem like it had the potential to become a new classic. The cast is certainly stellar, but of course a great cast does not necessarily make for a great movie. This is definitely true of Love the Coopers.

Love the Coopers uses the storytelling format that seems to be so popular these days, where we hear the stories of individuals before finding out how these individuals are connected to each other. The Coopers are the very picture of a dysfunctional family. The heads of the family, Charlotte and Sam, played by Diane Keaton and John Goodman, are in the midst of a divorce but they decide to put off telling their kids until after Christmas. Charlotte wants a picture-perfect Christmas, just one day where all seems well. Having apparently lost a child years ago, this is how she has chosen to live her whole life, putting on a happy face hoping no one notices when things are falling apart. Her kids have adopted that same behavior. As adults, their lives have not exactly worked out as planned and they fear displeasing their parents when the family gets together at Christmas. Their son Hank has been laid off and cannot find work so he tries every way he can to avoid discussing that reality. Eleanor, the daughter, is a struggling playwright who is dating a married man. As luck would have it though she meets a man at the airport on her way home and decides to pass him off as her boyfriend. Predictably, the truth comes out anyway, with the family ultimately realizing they do not need a picture-perfect Christmas or a picture-perfect life to be happy because they have each other.

Love the Coopers would have benefited from a little more polishing prior to its release. To be clear, this is not a bad movie. At times it was even entertaining. It is just not your typical Christmas movie. I feel like it could have taken place in July and it would have essentially been the same film. In addition, there is a lot going on in this movie and not all of it is pertinent to the story. There are scenes and characters that mean absolutely nothing and add no real value. Portions of dialogue include sacrilegious elements and political overtones, taking you out of the film and making it difficult to stay engaged in the characters' lives. So, no, you probably will not 'love the Coopers'. At best you will probably just learn to appreciate them for who they are, a family with problems who, deep down, love each other anyway.

Love the Coopers is in theaters now and also stars Ed Helms, Marisa Tomei, Amanda Seyfried, Olivia Wilde, and Alan Arkin. It is rated PG-13.

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