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Case Number 21821: Small Claims Court



Just Write

[MVD Visual](#) // 1997 // 102 Minutes // Rated PG-13
 Reviewed by Judge Patrick Bromley // July 20th, 2011

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All Rise...

Judge Patrick Bromley just says no.



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Editor's Note

Our review of [Just Write](#), published April 3rd, 2000, is also available.

The Charge

A comedy about falling in love...the WRITE way.

The Case

The 1997 romantic comedy **Just Write** is so harmless, so lightweight, so inconsequential and ineffectual that it evaporates right before your eyes as it plays out. While its heart is obviously in the right place, it never even

to transcending the romantic comedy genre or the conventions to which it so desperately clings. It's utterly forgettable, and, if you're a sucker for romantic comedies like I am, not a bad way to spend two hours.

A curiously-balded Jeremy Piven (of [Smokin' Aces](#); am I the only one who liked him better when he had less hair) as Harold, driver of a trolley car that gives Hollywood tours. He's obsessed with movies, particularly old Hollywood magic the movies used to have, but he's stuck taking care of his father (Moe Green himself, Alex Rocco) and family business. One day, Harold has a chance encounter with his favorite actress, Amanda Clark (Sherilyn Fenn in [Heart](#)), and somehow gives her the impression that he's a screenwriter. Since she's unhappy with the script for a potential blockbuster, Amanda asks Harold if he'll give it a read and share his thoughts with her. That, of course, is the start of a new friendship and possible romance—as long as Harold can convince her that he actually is a screenwriter. He can learn how to write a hit Hollywood screenplay in a matter of weeks.

As pleasant as it can be at times, it's almost impossible to recommend a movie like **Just Write**. From its cut-throat title to its plot based on deception to its Meet Cute and pat resolution, everything about the movie feels formulaic. The level casting, flat direction and lack of any edge whatsoever (even for a PG-13, a rating the movie does not feel like something made for TV. If there's anything that makes the film slightly more palatable for movie people (those that write for and read a DVD review site can only be described as "movie people"), it's that it does dole out some affection for Hollywood—primarily the classic era. Aside from Piven's few speeches and the Hollywood movie only tangentially takes place around Hollywood, though, and the screenwriting subplot is almost nonexistent. If anyone who knows anything about writing will likely be a bit offended by the way the art form is treated here. If you want a really good romantic comedy about the movie business, check out Christopher Guest's first film, [Picture](#) with Kevin Bacon. Great movie, that.

Piven is likable here, but feels somewhat miscast; since he's playing totally against type, he seems to be trying every time to come off as sweet and shy. Stripped of his pitbull intensity, he's almost too passive—by choice, of course. Every move and line reading begs for us to adore him. Sherilyn Fenn is a fine actress, too, but without the edge and weirdness only ever afforded to her by David Lynch, she's just kind of forgettable. She is done no favors by Piven either, which basically requires that she be little more than a cipher—she exists only in relation to Harold. It's not actually, that her character spends a lot of the movie complaining about the lack of a substantial female role she's reading, only to be let down in almost the exact same way by the screenplay for **Just Write**.

The DVD of **Just Write** is courtesy of MVD (a company I was previously unfamiliar with) and, to be honest, it's a pretty good VHS in the early days of DVD. The movie is presented full frame with a standard stereo soundtrack, and does pretty good at all. Colors are decent, but the whole image is very, very soft and features a good deal of print damage. Dust and dirt are visible throughout and a rather large scratch rears its head from time to time. There are no special features.

It's tempting, of course, to end the review with some snarky comment about **Just Write** be All Wrong. But that's just too hacky even for me, see? I mean, such a thought would never even enter my head. I'm not even capable of coming up with a line that insulting and dumb. So you'll get none of that here. No sir. Nothing like that.

Besides, that's too harsh for a movie that's hard to really like, but impossible to hate.

The Verdict

A harmless movie, a lousy DVD.

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Did we give **Just Write** a fair trial? [yes](#) / [no](#)

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