

# Fatboy chokes on its own fluff

Not even Simon Pegg can save this bloated rom-com from itself

## filmreview

### Run Fatboy Run

Directed by David Schwimmer  
Starring Simon Pegg, Thandie Newton, and Hank Azaria

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On paper, Dennis (Simon Pegg) sounds like an irreconcilable character, and his ultimate quest appears to be one of irrational, unreasonable, and unrealistic optimism. As *Run Fatboy Run* opens, Dennis finds himself trapped in his bedroom, sweating like a stuck pig, terrified of the idea of marrying his gorgeous, successful, and visibly pregnant fiancée Libby (Thandie Newton). His idea of a logical solution is to jump out his window and run for the hills.

Five years zoom by, and Dennis now lives in a dreary basement flat, toils as an inefficient security guard for a lingerie store, and hangs out with his friend Gordon (a hilariously off-the-cuff Dylan Moran), the only person in the movie who could possibly challenge Dennis for the title of "Biggest Schmuck in London." His ex, fortunately, is still gorgeous, still successful, and is starting to get cuddly with a gorgeous, successful American named Whit (Hank Azaria in the best shape of his life), who runs marathons for charity. The only contact Dennis gets with Libby is through their five-year-old son Jake.

Oddly enough, it's only now that Dennis begins to fear that his chances with Libby might forever evaporate, so he decides to try to win her love by running the marathon too, hoping to win her forgiveness for running away by, well, running away. Realistically, it's hard to believe that Libby would leave her charming, successful, friendly, and fairly decent boyfriend for the man who left her pregnant at the altar all on the basis of one race, but then

again, this is a romantic comedy you're watching.

This first directorial effort from *Friends* alumni David Schwimmer is a pure-blooded underdog story from start to finish. All of the ever-so-familiar essentials are present: the training montages, the supportive friends, the romantic rival who's not as perfect as he seems. This movie's plot is about as predictable as a game of *Clue*: sure, the characters, setting, and weapons of choice are different, but inevitably, someone will be murdered, er, will run a race, and everyone will learn a lesson in the end.

The only things that keep this film from being absolute hogwash are the actors. Simon Pegg manages the impossible feat of making Dennis sympathetic with a charming blend of impotent, frustrated humanity. Sure, Dennis lacks backbone, perseverance, and discipline, but as performed by Pegg, Dennis is a man who *knows* it, which makes it at least partially believable for him to overcome some of his flaws.

Meanwhile, Moran puts an amusing, cynical spin on the best-friend role—Gordon is a lazy, selfish, and all-round indifferent pal who's helping Dennis because he's bet his life savings on him, but who also wants to see Dennis make up for some of his past mistakes (especially since Libby is Gordon's cousin). Azaria, however, spends most of the film acting as if he hasn't read the last few pages of the script, playing Whit as such a realistically nice guy that when his inevitable eleventh-hour flaws are unearthed, it seems both false and truly unfair.

But even the actors can't completely redeem this piece of unrealistic, if heartfelt, marshmallow fluff. Sure, the underdog winning the day is never as common in real life as it is in film, but the emotional payoff can't occur if the ending isn't at least partly believable. There's so little progress shown between Dennis the loser and Dennis the against all odds winner that the ending comes across as the ultimate *deus ex machina*. *Run Fatboy Run* isn't even worth stopping to see in theatres—even Pegg fans would be advised to keep on running until it comes out on DVD.



INDY RANDHAWA

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