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"Safe Haven"

By Derek Zemrak



Julianne Hough and Josh Duhamel star in Relativity Media's "Safe Haven." (c) 2012 Safe Haven Productions. All Rights Reserved. Photo James Bridges

"Safe Haven" is Nicholas Sparks' best romantic film since "The Notebook" that was released in 2004, and is Sparks' first attempt at producing a film under his new production company Nicholas Sparks Productions.

He truly understands this genre of so called "chick flicks." "Safe Haven" is based on Sparks' bestselling novel of the same title, starring Julianne Hough ("Dancing with the Stars," "Rock of Ages") as Katie, a mysterious young lady on the run who shows up in the small coastal town of Southport, N.C. Katie's behavior is on the nervous side, which is most evident when the local police officers show up at the diner where she is working. The use of flashback quickly tells the audience that Katie was in a very abusive relationship.

As with all Sparks' novels and films, Katie falls in love with Alex (Josh Duhamel, "Transformers" and "Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!"), the widowed heartthrob who operates the local grocery store. As their relationship grows, it is torn apart by the discovery of Katie's past. The power of love once again must overcome.

Fans of the novel will truly enjoy the film, as it moves along at a good pace, just under two hours with a total running time of 115 minutes. Also, individuals who have not read the book will be pleasantly surprised with a twist in the script that caught me off guard.

"Safe Haven" is directed by three-time Oscar nominee Lasse Hallstrom ("The Cider House Rules," "My Life as a Dog"). As romantic dramas go, this is one worth the price of admission.

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