Kevin Smith is one of the most unique filmmakers in the business. Most often, Smith's films are either low-brow, vulgar (but hilarious) comedies without much plot, such as "Clerks", "Mallrats", or "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back", or else he goes in the opposite direction and makes semi-sappy romantic comedies such as "Chasing Amy" or "Jersey Girl". With "Zack and Miri Make a Porno", Smith does both. Mitch went to see it and reviews it for our readers tonight.

Kevin Smith is one of the most unique filmmakers in the business. He has made the profane into a genre unto itself by making profanity so prevalent in his movies that they are no longer used for shock value or titillation, but instead serve as prose for his observations about average people living very average lives.

No doctors, lawyers, high level politicians, or jet setters are at the center of a Kevin Smith film. Even his hilarious fantasy/satire "Dogma" had its center around an ordinary woman, relegating God to a slightly daffy woman who looked a lot like Alanis Morrissette. Smith uses people you see every day, using language you hear every day (even if not in the quantity of four-letter words Smith uses), and puts them in situations that almost everyone can identify with.

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Make no mistake about it, this may be the raunchiest of all of Smith's works, and that is saying something. If you have any aversion to all of the seven words George Carlin said you couldn't say on television, or to graphic verbal descriptions of every type of sexual behavior or bodily function you could imagine (and several that I never had imagined before), you need to stay away from this movie. Its "R" rating is well deserved. On the other hand, if you think that there is going to be a lot of nudity and actual (or simulated) sex in this film due to its title, you are also going to be disappointed.

That's because Smith has made another romantic comedy...it's just that this time, he wrapped it up in dirty words. Zack (Seth Rogen) and Miri (Elizabeth Banks) share a crappy apartment in a crappy area of Pittsburgh (isn't that redundant? Sorry...can't stop being a Browns fan, can I?), where they live platonically to split expenses since both of them work crappy jobs; Zack as a barista at a Starbucks knockoff, and Miri as a clerk at a mall clothing store. Hopelessly behind on their bills, they decided that the best way to make ends meet would be to make a porno.

The dialog between them as they debate this decision is Kevin Smith at his finest. It doesn't take much skill just to go for the Beavis and Butthead level laughs by saying dirty words. Smith's genius is in having two people using that language while still having intelligent, realistic discussions that the audience can identify with. The choice to do the porno wasn't about sex; it was about money. The two top reasons most people would go that route were (1) alternatives, and (2) fear of embarrassment to their families. Since neither of those apply to Zack and Miri, they quickly agree to go forward...although they are obviously concerned about what the repercussions might be on their friendship.

From there, the movie really gets enjoyable, and you get to see some great character roles and some incredible casting performing in some very funny bits. Two long-time Smith collaborators are in on the act. Jeff Anderson, who played Randall in both "Clerks" movies appears as the goal keeper on Zack's hockey team who ends up being the cinematographer/editor of the film. Jason Mewes, Jay from the "Jay and Silent Bob" teamings with Smith, is cast as one of the porn stars, and steals every scene he is in.

The female porn stars were actually pulled from real life adult film fame. Traci Lords hadn't been in "the business" for years, since the scandal back in the 80s when it was revealed that she was under age when she first appeared in porno films. She has carved out a nice career for herself in Hollywood since then, appearing in television series such as "Roseanne" and various B Films. But Smith talked her into "revisiting" her old profession, and she is an absolute hoot as Bubbles. Meanwhile, current pornstar Katie Morgan plays...well, basically she plays Katie Morgan...an airhead named Stacey who is there to do the really nasty sex scenes, while alternately making incredibly stupid or incredibly astute observations.

The final member of this strange troupe is Zack's co-worker Delaney, played by Craig Robinson. Delaney is brought on to finance the project, using money that he had planned to spend on a large flat-screen TV. As the henpecked husband who is producing a porno just for a little relief from his shrew of a wife, Robinson is hysterical.

Also look for Superman himself, Brandon Routh and Justin Long in brief appearances during a great scene at Zack and Miri's tenth high school reunion. I'm not sure which one of them had more fun spoofing themselves.

Despite all of the excellent work from the supporting cast, this movie is carried by its two leading players. Rogen continues to do what he does best; playing an immature, slovenly underachiever who is still a good person at heart. Smith said he wrote the part of Zack with Rogen, and no one else, in mind. No doubt about

that, as I couldn't possibly see any other actor making it work.

Elizabeth Banks really surprises as well in this film. To me, her casting was a bit puzzling, as she didn't seem to be the "type". Too sweet, and too much the epitome of the "girl next door". However, I should have remembered how well she did as the tough talking Giants fan who fell in love with Mark Wahlberg's Eagles walk-on Vince Papale in "Invincible". As adorable as she is, she could still pull off playing a foul mouthed, guy crazy best friend without losing one bit of the sweetness required for the role.

Which is good, because as mentioned, the movie is a love story at heart, and Rogen and Banks have the perfect chemistry with these two totally unique characters. They are the heart and soul of "Zack and Miri", with heavy emphasis on "heart. Like the porno that they make, it's not the best thing you'll ever see, and it has its flaws, but it is something worth watching.

My Rating: Frank Ryan (3 footballs).

NOTE: If you go see this film, you MUST sit through half of the credits, where it takes a break and shows you another five minutes of "what happened next" for the characters. It's classic, and without it, the film's semi-predictable ending might leave you a bit disappointed.