

'Four to Dinner': A clumsy questioning of love, soulmates



CHENNAI: Netflix's latest rom-com, "Four to Dinner," is the epitome of confusion. Written by Martino Coli and directed by Alessio Maria Federici, the Italian film plays like a jigsaw puzzle galloping through timelines and what is more frustrating is that the pieces do not seem to fit, although the concept it is built on is interesting.

"Four to Dinner," dubbed well in English, explores how minor squabbles and misunderstandings can drive a wedge between a man and woman who may be in a relationship that seems like love. But even fairly decent performances do not lift the film, which gets more and more convoluted as it traverses the lives of the protagonists.

At a dinner, a couple try and play matchmakers to two men and two women. Dario (Giuseppe Maggio) is a lawyer who gets attracted to Giulia (Matilde Gioli), a cynical mathematician. The other man, Matteo (Matteo Martari), falls for Chiara (Illenia Pastorelli).



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Federici questions the relevance of true love and the concept of a soulmate. His inferences converge on four probable outcomes with ego and the lack of courage to talk about feelings as underlying obstacles. By the end of 90 minutes, it is quite possible that some may begin to wonder about the idea of a soulmate and destiny, and the makers may bask in the thought that their work has achieved its target — but that's a big if.

The movie could have been more interesting if the writer and director had made a greater effort to flesh out the characters and establish a credible relationship among them. But, instead, they go in for hasty editing, weakening the narrative.

Other aspects of production, like settings, are clumsy. The apartments of the characters look as cluttered as the screenplay. Photographed carelessly with little feel for light and shade, the night shots are jarringly contrasted while daytime appears too bright for any modicum of aesthetics.

Although conceived as a light-hearted comedy, it is hardly that. Rather, it seems like an exercise in digging for answers that never come.
