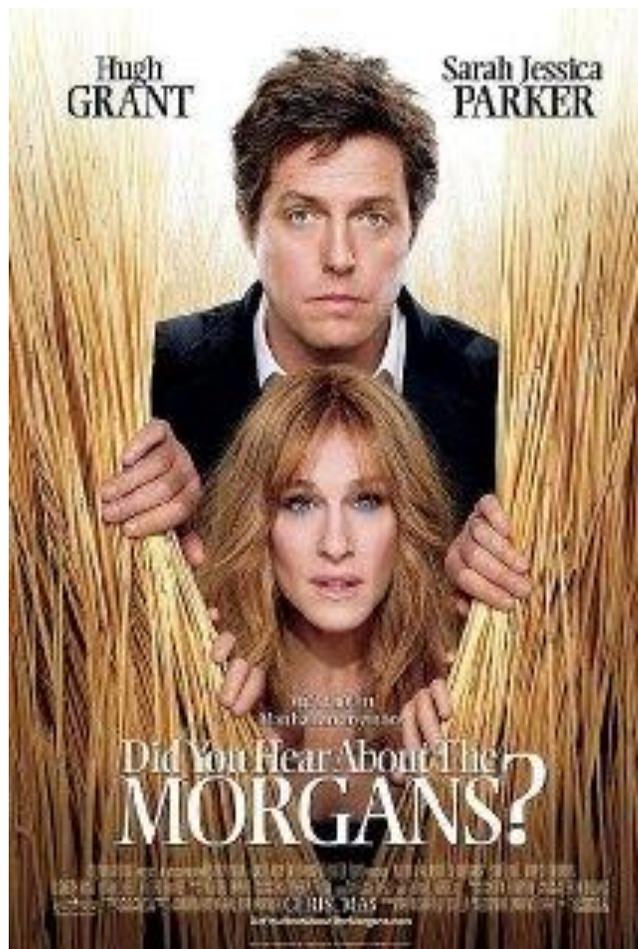


## *Did You Hear About the Morgans?*



*Reviewed by Garry Victor Hill*

Produced by Liz Glotzer & Martin Shafer. Directed by Marc Lawrence. Production Design by Kevin Thompson. Screenplay by Marc Lawrence. Photography by Florian Balhaus. Editing by Susan E. Morse. Music by Theodore Shapiro. A Relativity Media/ Castle Rock Entertainment Production. Columbia Pictures Distribution. Original Theatrical Release: December 2009. Length: 103 minutes.

Rating 75% All images are taken from the public domain with permission

## *Cast*

Hugh Grant as Paul Morgan

Sarah Jessica Parker as Meryl Morgan

Sam Elliott as Sheriff Clay Wheeler

Mary Steenburgen as Deputy Emma Wheeler

Wilford Brimley as Earl Granger

Gracie Bea Lawrence as Lucy Granger

Jesse Liebman as Adam Feller

Elisabeth Moss as Jackie Drake

Michael Kelly as Vincent

Kim Shaw as Nurse Kelly

David Call as Doctor Simmons

*Did You Hear About the Morgans?* is one of those mixtures of comedy and suspense that most reviewers dislike and most of the public love. This time this reviewer sides with the public. As one internet commentator e-mailed: to hell with the critics; with this movie you can take your children to it and enjoy it yourself.

One genuine problem has to be that the climax and conclusion are as predictable as tomorrow's sunrise. Getting there however proves an amusing trip.

The Morgans, Paul and Meryl are very upwardly mobile young urban professionals, twenty-first century New York yuppies all too acclimatized to the frenetic ways of their environment. They live in high rises, making incessant deals electronically. In politics they are being very politically correct. The pressure has its effects, like about half of American marriages, theirs is falling apart with divorce being planned.

The change begins when Meryl witnesses a murder and the police put them in a witness protection program until the killer (Michael Kelly) will be caught and put on trial. They are moved to the home of a couple who regularly take in such witnesses. The humour starts with the culture clash of couples. Paul and Meryl have been relocated to rural Wyoming. Their hosts are Sheriff Clay Wheeler and his wife Emma. Nobody now acting can epitomise rugged American Wild West individualism the way Sam Elliot can - and does here. The Wheelers give the impression that they consider pick-up trucks, telephones and televisions concessions to living in the twentieth century. Yes, the twentieth, not the twenty-first. They also give an impression that time stopped for them around 1960 – and they are happy that way and with each other.



*Sheriff Wheeler no it is not 1890.*

The Morgans, on the other hand, cannot cope with each other or their sudden change of locale. While they are vegetarians, the Wheelers hunt their own meat, and keep a cow's head in the fridge. Much of the film's humour comes from the culture clash between the two couples and between the small, predominantly Republican town and their big city liberal values. Hugh Grant is also perfectly cast as the big city executive so at home in New York's frenetic technology driven milieu and so inept, bumbling and unknowing outside it. Sarah Jessica Parker's character who is a quick study, provides needed balance between the extremes. Paul however as the next photo shows, has literally the biggest problem.



### *Trying to Fit in with different levels of success*

She also looks right in a cowboy hat: Paul does not. While the jokes both visual and verbal are seldom subtle they are shrewd, original and they do work. The film does have some subtle moments, such as *The Searchers* being on the Wheelers' television the night the Morgans arrive. That 1956 classic western movie is about obsessives tracking down kidnapped innocents – and the obsessives are after them – and unlike in *The Searchers* they are not on a rescue mission.

Light, well-paced, perfectly cast, with contrasts that aptly balance suspense and comedy, the e-mailer who wanted a film for herself and her children got it right.

