

## Interview: Oscar Nominee Jesse Eisenberg, Aziz Ansari Keep Comedy Real in ‘30 Minutes or Less’

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CHICAGO – Following our [low-grade review](#) [17] of the new Jesse Eisenberg and Aziz Ansari comedy “30 Minutes or less,” what we find most interesting is why these talented stars think it’s much funnier than it actually is.

HollywoodChicago.com recently discussed the keep-it-real film with “The Social Network” Oscar nominee Jesse Eisenberg and “Parks and Recreation” star Aziz Ansari. But overall, they struggled to sell a middle-of-the-road gag reel as the top-notch comedy they’d like it to be.



Aziz Ansari in “30 Minutes or Less”.

*Image credit: Wilson Webb, Columbia TriStar Marketing Group*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The humor in “30 Minutes or Less” comes from keeping it real and being clueless. Like when Jesse Eisenberg’s character has a bomb strapped to his chest and he has no idea what to do. So, of course, he turns to Wikipedia.

**Aziz Ansari:** Yes, we had the same thought when we shot the film. This is so real and these are exactly the things we’d do if we were actually stuck in that situation.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Coming from “The Social Network” where you played a very confident and intelligent guy, this time you’re the nervous and afraid everyman representing everyone because most of us would react that way.

**Jesse Eisenberg:** I thought that was a great take on this premise because it’s dealt with entirely realistically. And then as the guys get into it

and embrace these personas, it becomes a fantasy for them. Even though they look ridiculous, they picture themselves as slick bank robbers. But of course it doesn't actually look like that because they have no skill.



Dilshad Vadsaria in “30 Minutes or Less”.

*Image credit: Wilson Webb, Columbia TriStar Marketing Group*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** It seemed like you two (Eisenberg and Ansari) mostly paired off together and then Danny McBride and Nick Swardson were another duo separate from you two.

**Ansari:** Yes. That was fun for us when we finally watched the movie because Danny and Nick had no clue what we did with our material and we didn't know what they did with theirs.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** In this film, I see your straight-faced, monotone and deadpan humor like we saw from you in “Flight of the Concorde”. It's like naïve comedy. You're funny and it looks like you're not even trying to be.

**Ansari:** It's about playing it real. It's trying to do what's natural instead of forced jokes. That's the style for me and that's a lot of the smart comedy out these days. That's what we do with “Parks and Recreation” now and that's why it ends up being funny.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** How much were you allowed to go off script?

**Eisenberg:** (Director) Ruben (Fleischer) really encourages his actors to improvise. The script was wonderful, the characters were well drawn and the jokes were very specific. There was nothing vague or general about the comedy in the script. There was a specific voice and tone. But the way Ruben likes to work is if you have an idea, try it and some wonderful things can come out of it. There was nothing lacking in the material we had.





Aziz Ansari (left) and Jesse Eisenberg in “30 Minutes or Less”.

Image credit: Wilson Webb, Columbia TriStar Marketing Group

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Was there a particular scene that just happened but wasn’t written?

**Eisenberg:** Yeah. *Do you mind, Aziz, if I take this one?* This is in the trailer. We made up a song where he’s spray painting. It’s absurd and hysterical. That came from him coming up with a funny idea. In a script, that would probably look confusing.

**Ansari:** When you’re shooting a scene and after you’ve done it a couple times, there are so many little things coming from moments that just happened on set. Especially with the bank robbery. Ruben and the producers and editors did a great job filtering and picking the best stuff to use.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Speaking of your bank robbery, we’ve seen countless bank robberies in film. In the bank robbery that opens “The Dark Knight,” for example, The Joker uses pure fear. But your bank robbery scene makes it funny instead of serious and stressful.

**Ansari:** That’s exactly why it’s funny. We’re not really bank robbers. We’re not a crew like the guys in “Heat”. We’re a pizza delivery guy and a teacher. We’ve just seen movies and we’re trying to do what we think is the right way to rob a bank. We know nothing. Then all these things go wrong.

That’s what makes that scene so good. When I first read this script, I thought that was the best scene. Ruben lived up to the promise of this script with that scene. If I had to really rob one, I’d think: ‘Well, I guess there’s a silent alarm and we’ve got to account for that.’ You just know things you see in films.

**Eisenberg:** Something we didn’t plan for is that there’d be so many interpersonal interactions they’d have to account for. They ended up apologizing for what they’re doing and dealing with the nuisances of interacting with other people. We were so ill-prepared. They didn’t initially plan for that. Who considers the hostages when you’re robbing a bank?





Jesse Eisenberg (left) and Aziz Ansari in “30 Minutes or Less”.

*Image credit: Wilson Webb, Columbia TriStar Marketing Group*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Was part of your attraction to “30 Minutes or Less” working with Ruben again since “Zombieland”? There, Ruben did a great job of mixing action with comedy...

**Eisenberg:** Yes, and not only action with comedy but also dealing with real characters dealing with their own real lives. Even though the scope of the movie is very big, broad and funny, the characters still seemed credible. That’s rare in a movie that’s so heavily plotted like this one. Characters are usually just pawns and they’re inconsistent. They have voice changes from scene to scene depending on what the plot needs from them. But this didn’t have that at all.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** But like most movies do, everything’s still taken to the extreme – like the flame thrower with Nick Swardson’s character.

**Eisenberg:** Nick’s character is so desperately eager to please Danny McBride’s character. So, he goes so overboard.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You two have an interesting, underlying struggle. You’re best friends, then you hate each other, you (Eisenberg) slept with his (Ansari) sister and now you’re (Ansari) willing to bail on your friend at any moment...

**Ansari:** There are tiffs in any friendship. But deep down, there’s a lot of history and you’ll be loyal. Their friendship was put in a strange place when he slept with my twin sister. He was going to see it through because that was his best friend for however long. We never established how long.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The bomb strapped to your chest was a metaphor not only for actually getting blown up but also restarting your lame life. We have two guys who aren’t going anywhere...

**Eisenberg:** Exactly. It takes the worst day of his life to right everything, profess his love to a girl, quit his awful job with a terrible boss and reconcile with his best friend. The writers Michael Diliberti and Matthew Sullivan say these characters need this movie more than anyone else. They need this thing to happen to them more than someone else would.



Jesse Eisenberg in “30 Minutes or Less”.

*Image credit: Wilson Webb, Columbia TriStar Marketing Group*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** I see resolutions for your character (Eisenberg), but the villains? Danny McBride’s character is one of those you kind of don’t like, kind of do and kind of feel sorry for...

**Eisenberg:** The role was written for Danny. Danny has this very unique personal quality of saying the worst and most offensive stuff and still coming across as sweet. Nick has it as well. Danny’s character is more abrasive and evil.

**Ansari:** Danny’s character is someone who’s getting beat up by his dad. His dad is constantly prodding him. Even though he’s the bad guy, by the end you do sympathize with him.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** When it gets to be the end of the year and we look back at the best of the best in film, among other things we think about what was most memorable. What do you think people will think stands out most about “30 Minutes or Less”?

**Eisenberg:** For me, it’s special because the characters are credible people. I don’t see a lot of movies, so I can’t make many comparisons. But it seems to me that many comedies don’t feature genuine characters.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Wait, you don’t see a lot of movies, movie star Jesse Eisenberg?

**Eisenberg:** No.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Even though yours takes things to the extreme, I can see this kind of bank heist really happening.

**Eisenberg:** I hope it doesn’t.





Left to right: Jesse Eisenberg, Adam Fendelman and Aziz Ansari.

Image credit: Adam Fendelman, HollywoodChicago.com

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What about this film do you think will be memorable, Aziz?

**Ansari:** I think what works about the movie is that the four main guys have great chemistry. It feels fresh because you haven't seen us in a big comedy before with these pairings. The script is unique and the bank robbery is very memorable.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Chicago's supposed to have such great pizza, but no one here's so dedicated that we'll get it free if not delivered in 30 minutes or less.

**Eisenberg:** The delivery service in the movie is supposed to be great. Not necessarily the pizza.

*"30 Minutes or Less" stars Jesse "I'm Very Embarrassed About This One as Compared to My Last Fincher Hit" Eisenberg, Aziz "Dude, Please Pay to See My Film Because I Gotta Make Some Bank" Ansari, Danny "Eh" McBride, Nick "I'm Smart Enough to Play Stupid" Swardson, Fred "You Might Actually Know Who I Am" Ward, Michael "Damnit! I Hate Getting a Pen Stuck in My Face" Peña and a gaggle of other people you've never heard of.*

These mysterious supporting peeps who feel lucky to have gotten cast include Dilshad Vadsaria, Bianca Kajlich, Sam Johnston, Jack Foley, Elizabeth Wright Shapiro, Brett Gelman, Paul Tierney, Staci Lynn Fletcher and Gary Brichetto from sometimes actually revered director Ruben Fleischer and perhaps-you-shouldn't-write writers Michael Diliberti and Matthew Sullivan.

The film opened on Aug. 12, 2011 and, thankfully, only clocks in a short running time of 83 minutes so we can quickly go about our lives after we wither away from watching it. "30 Minutes or Less" is rated "R" for crude and sexual content, pervasive language, nudity and some violence, but all that seemingly scandalous stuff still poops out a stillborn flop.



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