

Blu-ray Review: 'Flypaper' Falters With Paper-Thin Characterizations

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CHICAGO – After the not-so-surprising success of the heavily marketed farce “The Hangover,” Jon Lucas and Scott Moore have quickly become Hollywood’s most overrated screenwriters. They specialize in injecting high concepts with frat-boy vulgarity, mean spirited gags and entirely superficial warmth. If Zach Galifianakis hadn’t bolstered “Hangover” with his deadpan genius, the film almost surely would’ve flopped.

Yet while Lucas and Moore borrowed familiar formulas for underwhelming duds like “Ghosts of Girlfriends Past” and “The Change-Up,” their “Hangover” admittedly benefited from a clever structure. It allowed moviegoers to join the characters in piecing together the wacky events that occurred during an inebriated night that unfolded offscreen. The writing duo’s very next project was the barely released indie “Flypaper,” which is to “Hangover” what “I Know What You Did Last Summer” was to “Scream.”



Blu-ray Rating: **1.5/5.0**

This time, Lucas and Moore work within the standard heist genre, while casting Patrick Dempsey against type as a slick motormouth who attempts to solve a murder that occurred during the heist. Dempsey is one of many seemingly innocent bystanders held hostage in a bank by two sets of robbers, one of which is far less intelligent than the other. As the hapless duo nicknamed “Peanut Butter and Jelly,” Tim Blake Nelson and Pruitt Taylor Vince attempt to deliver the same sort of irreverent wit that Galifianakis mastered, but the script consistently lets them down with a plethora of stale banter. Since Dempsey is off his meds, he’s under the same sort of mental duress that the “Hangover” trio fought against as they struggled to solve their own mystery. Yet in the case of “Flypaper,” the plot is impossible to care about because it concerns an assortment of one-note caricatures constructed out of cardboard.



Flypaper was released on Blu-ray and DVD on Nov. 15, 2011.

Photo credit: IFC Films

From its opening moments comprised of what appear to be storyboard stills for a stylish title sequence, "Flypaper" registers as a lazy sketch. After Dempsey escapes through a ceiling panel, drops in on the villains, attempts to interrogate them about the murder and still manages to not get killed, it's clear that the villains have no intention of using their guns for anything other than flesh wounds. Imagine if Denis Leary from "The Ref" teamed up with Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern from "Home Alone," and you'll have a fair approximation of these bumbling buffoons. Nelson squints through his Gomer Pyle impression, while Vince manages to create some oddly endearing moments for his hopelessly dim bulb.

Ashley Judd and Jeffrey Tambor have nothing to do but wait for a few lackluster twists to emerge at the end, while Dempsey resembles an over-caffeinated basket case devoid of his trademark charm. Lost in the shuffle are overqualified stars like Mekhi Phifer, Curtis Armstrong, John Ventimiglia and one of this year's serious Oscar contenders (for "The Help"), Octavia Spencer. Ultimately, "Flypaper" is no funnier than "Clue: The Movie," since it wastes a first-rate ensemble with loads of plot exposition punctuated by lame one-liners.

The film is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio) and includes over two-and-a-half hours of raw interview footage that effectively illustrates the hell of a press junket. One by one, the actors sit captive as they're forced the answer the exact same questions again and again (such as "What was the appeal of the project?"). The interviewer has a particularly annoying knack of asking the actors to summarize the plot, as if the viewer had chosen to sit through the interviews prior to watching the film. Too bad no one bothered to condense these awkward talking heads into an actual featurette.

Nearly all of the actors describe the film as "laugh out loud" funny, thus proving that what works on the page can easily fall flat once visualized. Lucas's presence on the disc is sorely lacking, though his writing partner Moore is on hand for the longest interview segment. Director Rob Minkoff, best known for family fare like "The Lion King," stepped in six weeks prior to production, and it's difficult to discern precisely what appealed to him about the project, beyond its potential marketability. Judd refers to the experience as her "funniest time onset," though she worried that having nonstop fun behind the scenes would end up stealing laughs from the audience. Consider them stolen.

‘Flypaper’ is released by IFC Films and stars Patrick Dempsey, Ashley Judd, Tim Blake Nelson, Pruitt Taylor Vince, Mekhi Phifer, Jeffrey Tambor, John Ventimiglia and Matt Ryan. It was written by Jon Lucas and Scott Moore and directed by Rob Minkoff. It was released on Nov. 15, 2011. It is not rated.



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