

# Film Review: Robert De Niro Triumphs Again in ‘Being Flynn’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 9, 2012 - 6:12pm

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CHICAGO – The intensity that Robert De Niro puts into his movie characters had slackened a bit, as he bent his reputation on more commercial roles. But Director Paul Weitz has revived the old legend with a meaty, purposeful character, and De Niro delivers it with his old fire. ‘Being Flynn’ is not a comeback, but a gratefully received reboot.



This exceptional character study has De Niro playing a homeless man, accepting the fate with as much rancor and cardboard philosophy as he can muster. What is so impressive about the role is that it’s wrapped in a logical, sensitive story about the relationship between a father and son, at a point where all the signs and past encounters should add up to no relationship at all. This is the jumping off place for De Niro’s characterization, and it never devolves into sentiment or easy solutions. Paul Weitz has adapted Nick Flynn’s memoir into a larger story about not being able to choose your relatives, and what to do or not to do about it.

Nick Flynn (Paul Dano) has had a difficult childhood. His earnest but flighty mother Jody (Julianne Moore) has not left him much of anything, and his father Jonathan (Robert De Niro) was nowhere to be found, except in a series of strange letters over the years. Nick is an erstwhile writer like his father, but is underemployed and in need of new housing. He settles for a roommate situation in an old abandoned strip club, and takes a job at a homeless shelter that his friend-turned-lover Denise (Olivia Thirlby) has recommended.

Out of the blue, he encounters his father for the first time in years. It seems the old man has been kicked out of his apartment, and re-connects with Nick to basically to again ignore him, and berate him anew. Jonathan then loses his last job and ends up homeless on the street. When the father checks into the same homeless shelter where the son works, each man will confront demons that will teach them some life lessons.

*“Being Flynn” continues its limited release in Chicago on March 9th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Robert De Niro, Paul Dano, Julianne Moore, Olivia Thirlby, Lily Taylor and Eddie Rouse. Adapted screenplay and directed by Paul Weitz. Rated “R”*

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The Son Rises: Paul Dano (Nick Flynn) in “Being Flynn”  
*Photo credit: David Lee for Focus Features*

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