

Film Review: Tour de Force for Jack Black in Fact-Based ‘Bernie’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on May 18, 2012 - 5:34pm

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CHICAGO – Jack Black is a smart and interesting actor. Not content to ride on the modern day John Belushi-type roles that might have pigeonholed him, Black portrays “Bernie,” a convincing conniver in Texas, based on a true story. Veterans Matthew McConaughey and Shirley MacLaine add spice to the brew.



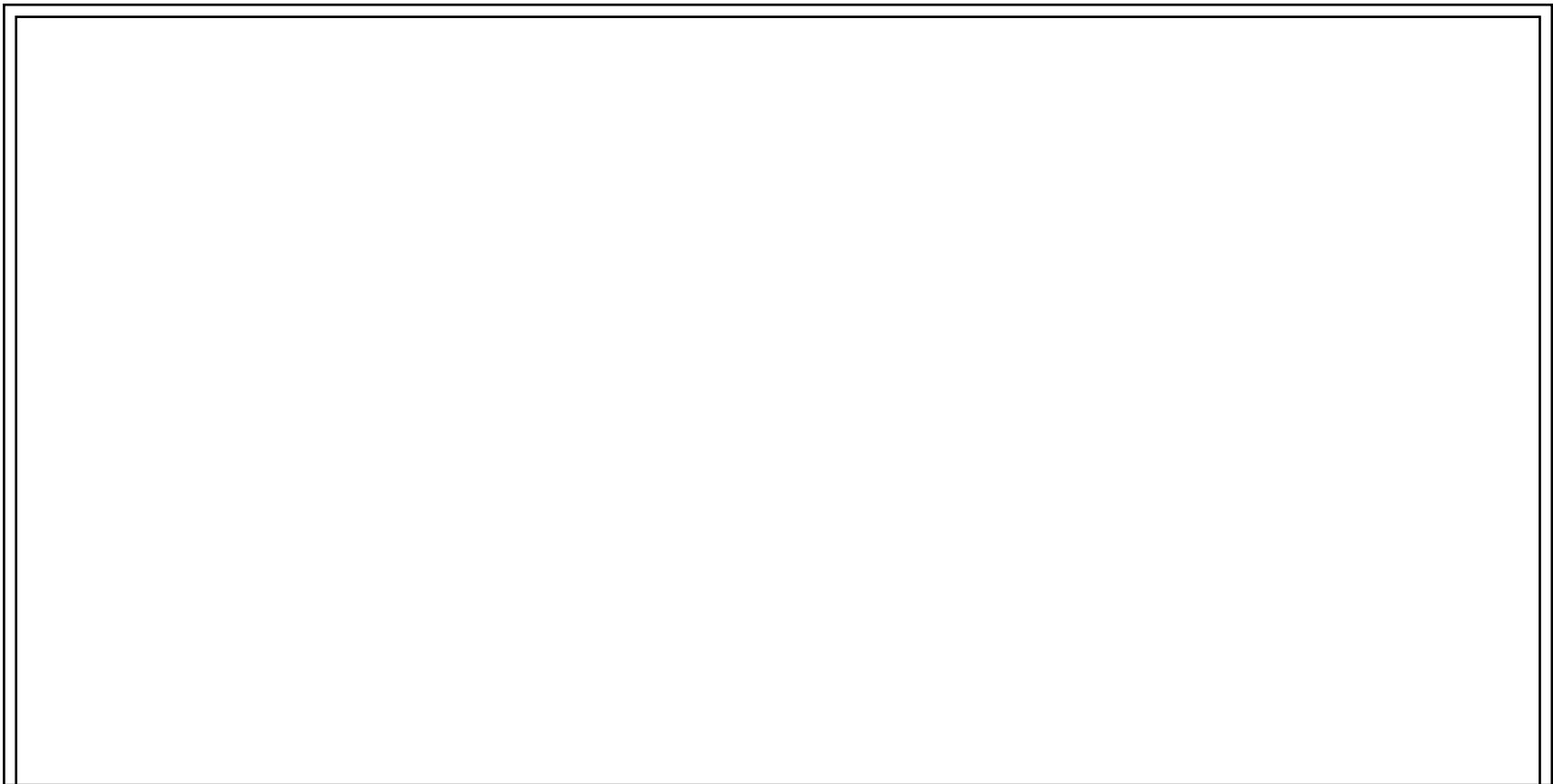
Proving again that truth is stranger than fiction, director Richard Linklater (“Me and Orson Welles,” “Dazed and Confused”) goes back to his native Texas and creates a dark comedy based on the memorable personalities that are involved in this true story of a rich widow and her caretaker named Bernie. Jack Black establishes the Bernie character early, and precisely delivers all of the permutations that makes the circumstance so unbelievable. The story is driven by Black, and he makes the character both sympathetic and clearly off-kilter.

Bernie (Jack Black) is a mortician, looking for a new town in Texas to ply his trade. He lands at the Hawthorne Funeral Home in Cathage, Texas. He becomes one of the town’s favorite sons, meticulous in handling grieving families and especially the rich widows left behind. One of those widows is Majorie Nugent (Shirley MacLaine), spouse of a deceased weathy oilman. She is unrepentantly unpleasant, and only Bernie can seem to get through to her. Before long, he has quit his other job to solely handle her estate and care.

The relationship between the two is chattel for town gossip, and even in that realm starts to unravel. Nugent’s penchant for arrogance and rudeness begins to wear at Bernie, until finally he shoots her four times in the back with a shotgun. After hiding the body, the case begins to build against him, and the town’s District Attorney, Danny Buck Davidson (Matthew McConaughey) is set to prosecute the murderer. But given Bernie’s reputation as a nice man, and Nugent’s opposite rep in the town, that might not be as easy as it seems.

“Bernie” continues its limited release in Chicago on May 18th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Jack Black, Matthew McConaughey and Shirley MacLaine. Screenplay adapted by Skip Hollandsworth (from his article) and Richard Linklater. Directed by Richard Linklater. Rated “PG-13”

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Shirley MacLaine (Marjorie) and Jack Black as the Title Character in 'Bernie'
Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment



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