

## Film Review: It Hurts Trying to Laugh at ‘The Comedian’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 3, 2017 - 12:04pm

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CHICAGO – Mention this possibility...Robert De Niro portrays an aging stand-up comic who once had a popular sitcom in the 1980s...and 99% of filmgoers are in. Add that he beds a woman 25 years his junior, does community service, roasts Cloris Leachman and becomes a reality show host, and suddenly 80% of that 99 are out. That's just part of the over-extension and dread in “The Comedian.”



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

The film had a ton of promise it just couldn't deliver on. On the one hand, they wanted De Niro's character to take on the role of a dirty comedian – like Bob Saget of “Full House,” trying to get rid of his clean sitcom image – and for the most part the routines work and showcased De Niro at his best. On the other hand, there was the 90% (I'm into percentages in this review) of the rest of the movie, which was hackneyed movie plot clichés, pieced together by four screenplay writers (red flag alert). By the second act or so, the film becomes torture, with each scene clicking away towards the possibility that the story might end, yet pulling the rug out and still going on. With retroactive flashbacks, I still think I'm watching it, that's how long it felt.

Robert De Niro is Jackie, a New York City stand-up comic close to hitting the skids. He had some notoriety in the 1980s, appearing on popular family sitcom that had an annoying catchphrase – which fans keep shouting at him. His agent Miller (Edie Falco) can get him gigs based on the old character, but Jackie wants to move on, and his act consists of dirty humor to counteract the image.

After assaulting an audience member in a heckling incident, Jackie is sentenced to community service, where he meets another time server, Harmony (Leslie Mann), whose father Mac (Harvey Keitel) wants her to move to Florida. Jackie and Harmony hook up, much to chagrin of her father and his brother (Danny DeVito). When a chance at a comeback at the Friar's Club (a comedian society in NYC), Jackie needs to be on point to move forward.

*“The Comedian” opens nationwide on February 3rd. Featuring Robert De Niro, Edie Falco, Danny DeVito, Harvey Keitel, Patti LuPone, Leslie Mann, Charles Grodin and Cloris Leachman. Screenplay by Art Linson, Jeffrey Ross, Richard LaGravenese and Lewis Friedman. Directed by Taylor Hackford. Rated “R”*



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Robert De Niro as Jackie in ‘The Comedian’

*Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics*



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