

‘The Tourist’ Twists Predictably, Lacks Chemistry Between Angelina Jolie, Johnny Depp

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Rating: **1.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Though you probably don’t know his name, Christopher McQuarrie’s involvement might sell you on paying to see “The Tourist” even more than “A”-list stars Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp. After all, McQuarrie is the writer behind 1995’s Oscar-winning magnum opus by the name of “The Usual Suspects”.

While these two films both embarked on the pursuit of conning you into one belief and then twisting you into another, “The Usual Suspects” masterfully succeeds in every fiber of its being while “The Tourist” can’t even play ball in the same league. And to even consider “The Tourist” as Hitchcockian would be a crime of blockbuster proportions bestowed upon the true man of mystery.



Johnny Depp (left) and Angelina Jolie in “The Tourist”.

Image credit: Peter Mountain, Columbia Pictures

Though McQuarrie’s words might be found somewhere in this Angelina Jolie model fest, the ink from its two other writers (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck and Julian Fellowes) clearly snuffs away McQuarrie’s natural skill. Even Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, which we know has talent because we saw it in his German film “The Lives of Others” only four years ago, wasn’t on his “A” game in “The Tourist” as its writer and director.

While you’re awed and mind blown for weeks thereafter because of Kevin Spacey’s climatic reveal in “The Usual Suspects,” you’re insulted in that same moment in “The Tourist”. You’re tragically underwhelmed with the mismatched Jolie/Depp pair either because you saw the twist

coming since 13 minutes in or because you’re ultimately left with needing to be much more emotionally connected and elaborately hoodwinked.

Instead, you have one of Hollywood’s most common epic fails today: a couple mega stars trying to carry the weight of a weakly scripted film and failing to do so. But Depp and Jolie – whose character needed to be somewhat blemished at some point – aren’t entirely to blame. “The Tourist” should have picked a more successful film than the unknown 2005 French movie “Anthony Zimmer” from writer and director Jérôme Salle when it decided to be a remake.



Angelina Jolie with director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (right) on the set of “The Tourist” in Venice, Italy.

Image credit: Peter Mountain, Columbia Pictures

“The Tourist” needed a restart at its final script phase (or, perhaps, should have just been titled “Pay \$10 Just to Gawk at Angelina Jolie’s Pretty Face Even Though You Can Get Online Porn For Free”). Instead of being made into a feature film, you could cut away the entirety of the story along with the rest of the actors and just use video of Jolie strutting slowly and batting her eyelashes lushly. Then you’d have a mighty fine perfume ad.

And in a film where the two primary love bugs are supposed to evolve into love or at least mutual infatuation, Jolie and Depp neglect to realize the critical ingredient: **chemistry**.

Jolie’s debonair character is too suave and flawless while Depp’s dense persona is too clunky and flawed. Together, they make perhaps one of the most awkward and unauthentic couples shown on the big screen in quite some time. It’s like they’re mocking paying audiences for contributing to their massive paychecks without even attempting to convince us that they’re really supposed to be smoldering in love. Even boating the quixotic canals of Venice or gallivanting about in amorous Paris didn’t set these hearts ablaze.



Paul Bettany in "The Tourist".

Image credit: Peter Mountain, Columbia Pictures

Once you're able to see through the candy of your eyes being glazed over by Jolie's beauty and sexual prowess, Paul Bettany in a supporting role is the only redeeming part of this film. While he's locked into a role as an inspector like we've seen in many films before, he uses his time memorably and dramatically. Bettany is the closest glimpse this film has to authenticity.

That said, you can tell "The Tourist" desperately wanted to be clever. You can feel that it had the inkling of a great caper movie. You can even imagine that its makers had a swell time lollygagging the thing together. But never once does the film live up to its true potential or ultimately become reminiscent of the successes of its predecessors.

In an attempt to find something interesting in "The Tourist," one must look not in the film itself but into trivia about it. The film, which received a rating of "PG-13" for "violence and brief strong language," has the same rating as all previous Jolie movies (except for the Chicago-filmed "Wanted"). That said, Depp in the last 10 years hasn't been a "PG-13" kind of guy (except for his "Pirates of the Caribbean" films). Depp has more favored the "R" ("Public Enemies," "The Libertine") or "PG" ("Alice in Wonderland," "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory") variety.



Angelina Jolie (left) and Johnny Depp in “The Tourist”.

Image credit: Peter Mountain, Columbia Pictures

Even more, Depp’s presence in “The Tourist” opposite Jolie wasn’t initially supposed to be. First Tom Cruise and then Sam Worthington (who bowed out because of “creative differences”) were initially going to play Depp’s role as Frank Tupelo. And Charlize Theron was initially going to embody Jolie’s character of Elise Clifton-Ward. Cruise, Worthington and Theron ended up all dodging the bullet of attaching themselves to this massively missed opportunity.

While it’s common for a film to go through a couple “A”-list star changes, it’s less typical and more telling that it went through so many directorial alterations. It’s likely they saw the bomb that was coming. Even the film’s eventual director ended up leaving before coming back.

Initially being helmed by director Lasse Hallström, he departed “The Tourist” because of “scheduling conflicts”. And Bharat Nalluri joined as director and then booted himself because of additional “difficulties” with the project.



Johnny Depp in “The Tourist”.

Image credit: Peter Mountain, Columbia Pictures

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When Angelina Jolie finally signed on to cash her check, so did Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. He also initially left because of “creative differences,” but after many others (including Alfonso Cuarón of Oscar-nominated “Children of Men” fame) didn’t pan out, Donnersmarck returned. It appears he came back to reluctantly get in and get out while making his piggy bank happy.

“The Tourist” stars Angelina Jolie, Johnny Depp, Paul Bettany, Rufus Sewell, Timothy Dalton, Steven Berkoff, Christian De Sica, Alessio Boni, Daniele Pecci, Giovanni Guidelli, Raoul Bova, Bruno Wolkowitch, Marc Ruchmann, Julien Baumgartner and François Vincentelli from director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck and writers Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, Christopher McQuarrie and Julian Fellowes. The film is rated “PG-13” for violence and brief strong language, has a running time of 103 minutes and opened everywhere on Dec. 10, 2010.



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