'In Time' With Justin Timberlake Fails to Build on Clever Idea

Submitted by **BrianTT** [1] on October 28, 2011 - 8:17am

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Rating: **1.5**/5.0

CHICAGO – Andrew Niccol has delivered complex, daring science fiction before, most notably in his scripts for "The Truman Show" and "Gattaca." Sadly, "In Time" will never be mentioned in the same breath with those films. This is a one-idea film and that one idea is poorly executed. With some of the cheesiest, surface-level dialogue of the year, a complete lack of chemistry between the leads, and some of the choppiest action editing of the year, "In Time" is a near disaster.

Nearly every scene, line, and theme in "In Time" is based on the same relatively clever (but also kinda goofy) concept of a world in which time is literally money. It's a good idea for the foundation of a sci-fi script but nothing is built on it. We are genetically engineered to have one year to live after we turn twenty-five. And we have a ticking clock on our arm counting down the minutes left. What makes time currency is that it doesn't have to be a year. An individual's time can be increased or spent and therefore becomes not only what keeps the heart ticking but what keeps society functioning as well. It becomes currency. Coffee costs four minutes. Time with a lady of the night a couple hours. A fancy new car five dozen years.
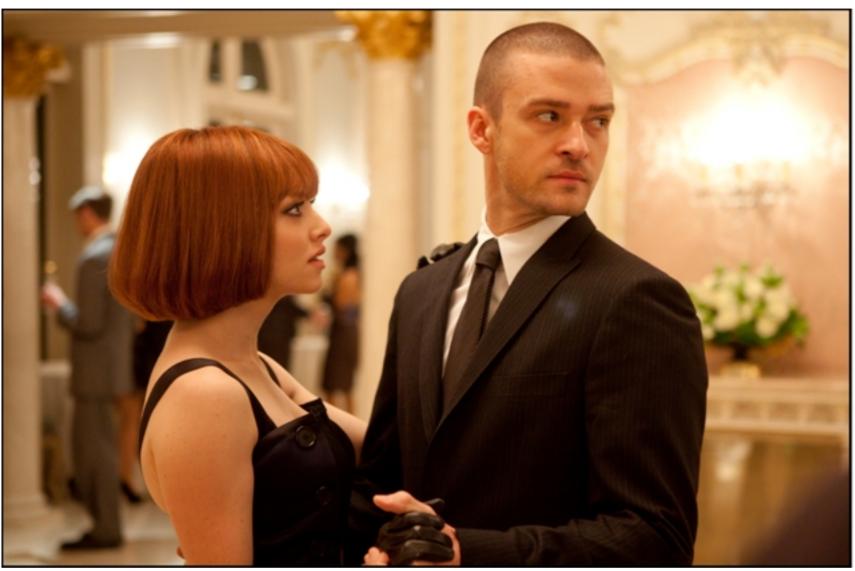

In Time
Photo credit: Fox

Many people on the lower level of society wake up every morning with less than a day on their clock. They work crappy factory jobs to add a few more hours and get through another day. If they don't work, they die. Some even fight in what is basically a variation on arm wrestling (time is passed person to person by holding wrists) to take precious time from one another. Missions hand out time when they have it. Pawnbrokers deal in it. Lenders charge interest for it. The only benefit of this drab existence seems to be that everyone looks 25 forever.

Our Logan in this variation on "Logan's Run" is Will Salas (Justin Timberlake), a hard-working young man with a loving mother (Olivia Wilde) and loyal friend (Johnny Galecki). After joining the latter at a bar, Will meets a man named Henry Hamilton (Matt Bomer) who has stumbled on to the wrong side of the tracks. With over a century on his arm, Henry is not unlike someone flashing a million dollars in a blue-collar, crime-ridden neighborhood and so Will knows he's going to get his "clock cleaned" if he doesn't protect him. Before the Minutemen (a gang who steals time from whomever they can) grab him, Will rushes Henry to a safe place.
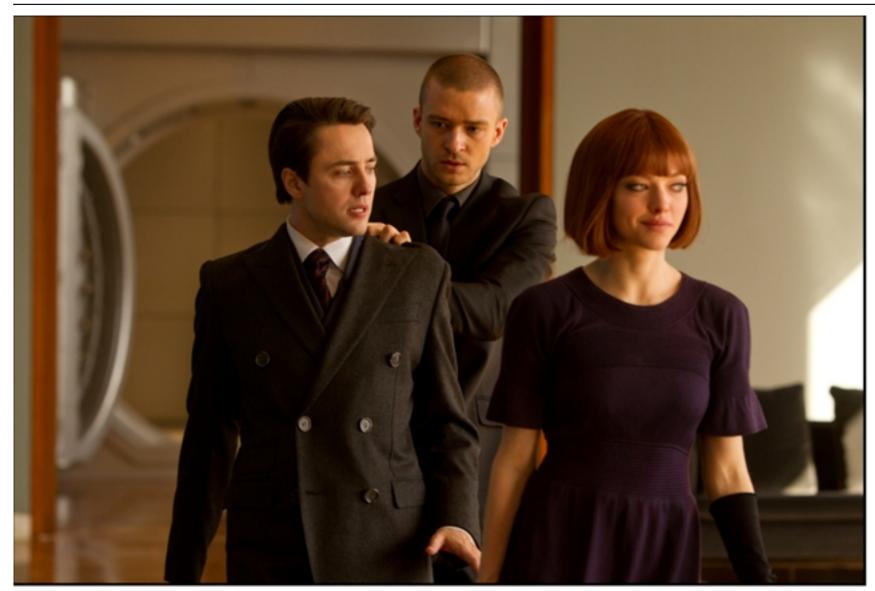

In Time
Photo credit: Fox

After a nauseatingly on-the-nose conversation (there will be many less-than-subtle talks about using time to its greatest advantage throughout the film) where Henry plants the suggestion that the gap between the haves and have-nots is not only intentional but enforced by a corrupt system, Will wakes up to discover that Henry has gifted all of his time to him and died. Will decides to make the most of this gift, first traveling to the wealthy district of New Greenwich to try and meet some power brokers and increase his banked time.

Will quickly draws the attention of stunning socialite Sylvia Weis (Amanda Seyfried), daughter of Philippe Weis (Vincent Kartheiser of "Mad Men"), one of the richest men in the world. After taking Philippe in a daring game of poker, Will becomes even dreamier for the danger-seeking Sylvia. The conceit is that in a world where old age can't kill you, the true immortals (the ones with centuries on their clocks) have become sterile and safe, knowing that only an accidental death can end their lives. Sylvia is looking for some danger and she finds some on the run with Will. Chased by the Timekeepers (led by Cillian Murphy, easily the best thing about the movie), the Bonnie & Clyde of time try to steal what they can and filter it from the top to the bottom of the food chain. Occupy Wall Street would be proud.

In Time
Photo credit: Fox

Well, they would be if it wasn't all so silly. And "In Time" could have been silly in a fun way (at least Murphy seems to know not to play the film so deadly self-serious and the movie occasionally comes to life when he appears) but it's too repetitive and dull to be called fun. Most horrendous is the dialogue, almost all of which sounds like it was written by a ten-year-old boy given this concept. Niccol has proven to be a subtle writer before so one must assume that reshoots and producer interference led to this script that's completely devoid of it. Everyone in the film says what they're going to do before they do it in such a ridiculous manner that it's almost like they're describing the action for the blind. Every other line is something about the "time is money" concept or even worse an exchange like "*What are we going to do? Whatever we have to.*" or the repeated stupidity of "*Can you steal something that's already been stolen?*"

The script is the worst element of "In Time" but poor Justin Timberlake, who I've liked in the past, is miscast here, in no small part because he has absolutely no chemistry with Ms. Seyfried. Both young stars are hurt by a herky-jerky and clearly reshot story that never defines their relationship at all as she goes from kidnap victim to partner in time crime. Timberlake just isn't believable as an action hero but that's also because Niccol proves that he can't stage a decent action sequence – "In Time" has none and the ones that seem to have been inserted in the rumored reshoots look out of place. The film never builds tension because we don't care about these characters or their silly quips about the importance of time. It's just a shame that so many talented people spent theirs making such a waste of it for the viewer.

"In Time" stars Justin Timberlake, Amanda Seyfried, Cillian Murphy, Olivia Wilde, Matt Bomer, Johnny Galecki, Vincent Kartheiser, and Alex Pettyfer. It was written and directed by Andrew Niccol. It was released on October 28th, 2011.

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