

‘The Double’ Copies Lazy Performances, Silly Twists

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 4, 2011 - 2:11pm

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – It’s ironic that a film called “The Double,” starring Richard Gere & Topher Grace, would remind one of so many superior thrillers. It is in itself a double, a carbon copy of better films that focuses on all of the wrong elements, thinking that audiences are still dumb enough that just throwing twist after twist at them will keep their head spinning enough to not realize that what they just saw not only makes no sense at all but wasn’t even remotely entertaining.

Don’t worry that the trailer for “The Double” gives away the title character because the film itself does the same by the end of the first reel. If co-writer/director Michael Brandt (who wrote “Wanted,” a film that looks downright logical compared to this one) had been content with just one twist, his thriller might have been effective, but savvy viewers will know that this is the kind of movie in which the writers don’t reveal a double agent early without having a few more clichés coded into their screenwriting program. With nothing resembling a character worth rooting for, the fact that the plot of “The Double” just gets sillier and sillier makes it one of the most annoying films of the year.



The Double

Photo credit: Image Entertainment

Phoning in a performance more than he ever has in a career marred by a few lazy leading man turns lately, Richard Gere stars as Paul Shepherdson, a retired CIA Agent called back to service after the death of a Senator hints that a notorious Russian madman that Shepherdson killed may be alive after all. Assisting Shepherdson in his quest to track down the one that apparently got away is whiz kid Ben Geary (Topher Grace), a supposed expert on the infamous criminal who can ostensibly be the brains to Paul’s field-tested brawn.

If you’re thinking “The Double” is going to be an oil-and-water buddy thriller, Brandt switches clichés on you pretty quickly, revealing that Shepherdson is actually the Russian in question and we watch as he eliminates those who could identify him. As Ben gets closer to realizing

that his partner cannot be trusted, the film constantly changes allegiances. Should we be rooting for Ben to take down Paul? How should we feel when Paul warns Ben's stunning wife (Odette Annable) that she and her hubby should run for the hills? Are we supposed to now like a man that we saw garrote someone in a parking garage?



The Double

Photo credit: Image Entertainment

The twisting aspects of viewer relation to the protagonist could have made for a challenging dramatic thriller, but Gere isn't up for something of that depth and Brandt never takes him there. Instead of character development or commentary on the ever-changing identities of the modern spy (wait for the FAR superior "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" in a few weeks if that's what you seek), we get cliché on top of cliché on top of stupid twist on top of shattering of suspension of disbelief. Without ruining too much, the end of "The Double" is total, absolute nonsense.

A bungled final act wouldn't be as annoying if there was anything entertaining about the first two to make the goofy writing easier to bear, but perhaps the worst sin of "The Double" is that it takes itself so damn seriously. It's not even fun. Yes, there's a decent car chase, but you can see more engaging action on weekly television nowadays. A few moderately entertaining thriller scenes in service of a silly script won't get you much further than an episode of "NCIS." I take that back. Most episodes of "NCIS" aren't this dumb.

"The Double" stars Richard Gere, Topher Grace, Odette Annable, Stephen Moyer, and Martin Sheen. It was directed by Michael Brandt and released on November 4th, 2011.



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