

Denzel Washington Lives in Boring ‘Safe House’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 9, 2012 - 9:37pm

- [Brendan Gleeson](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Daniel Espinosa](#) [4]
- [Denzel Washington](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Movie Review](#) [7]
- [Nora Arnezeder](#) [8]
- [Ruben Blades](#) [9]
- [Ryan Reynolds](#) [10]
- [Safe House](#) [11]
- [Sam Shepard](#) [12]
- [Vera Farmiga](#) [13]



Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – “Safe House” is so overly familiar that you not only will think that you’ve seen it before and know exactly where it’s going before it gets there, but you will also barely remember having seen it once it’s over. It’s cinematic fast food – relatively streamlined but also not difficult to make for anyone involved, generally bad for you, and totally forgettable. It’s all so, well, “Safe.”

It seems clear to me that “Safe House” started life as a better film. Here’s the pitch and the movie I wish I had seen – “Keyser Soze goes to a safe house.” Imagine that movie. A world-famous, notorious criminal ends up in a safe house run by a relatively green agent and the poor guy has to deal not only with the lunatic now in his care but also everyone who wants him dead. THAT movie could have been great. “Safe House” is not that movie. You see, once you cast Denzel Washington in the Soze role and he decides to produce as well, everything changes. He becomes nicer, more likable, and a whole lot duller. The biggest problem with “Safe House” is that it’s a movie about a legendary figure in the intelligence community who never lives up to his reputation. He’s been neutered to the point that even an actor as charismatic as Washington can’t bring him to life.



Safe House

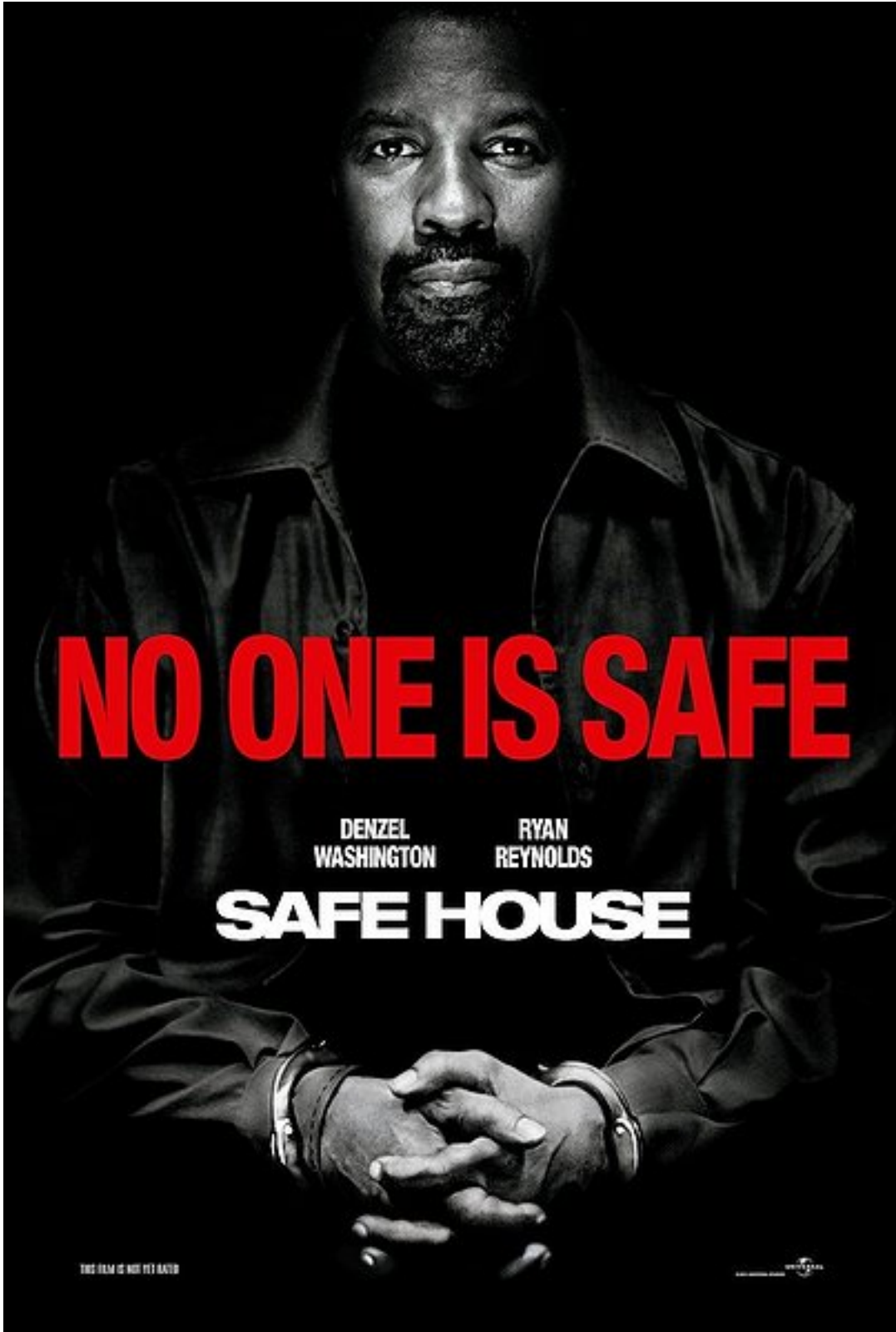
Photo credit: Fox Pictures

Matt Weston (Ryan Reynolds) is the kind of action movie character who one instantly knows is about to have a very bad day. There’s never been a government agent who complains about being bored who doesn’t fall into some very bad shit in the history of film. So, when Weston complains to his boss, David Barlow (Brendan Gleeson) that he’s not seeing enough activity in his Cape Town safe house, anyone who’s

seen an action movie knows that’s about to change.

Enter Tobin Frost (Washington), a man who we meet bartering a deal for a microchip from an MI6 agent named Alec Wade (Liam Cunningham). Wade tells him that just possessing the file (which he hints is filled with all kinds of international secrets) will make Frost target #1. Of course, as soon as our goatee-ed friend leaves the meeting, a group of heavily-armed men try to kill him. With nowhere left to run, he actually walks into a consulate and we learn that Frost used to be a U.S. agent who went rogue a decade ago. While people back in the States (including Vera Farmiga and Sam Shepard) try to figure out what to do next, Frost is taken to Weston’s safe house.

Not for long. Shortly after interrogation (by Robert Patrick of all people) begins, the same gang that chased Frost to the consulate finds the safe house and basically kills everyone except Weston and his guest. Weston turns out to be tougher than he looks and a car chase, the best scene in the movie, ensues. The rest of “Safe House” consists of Weston getting to the bottom of a few questions about what Frost was doing, what the file reveals, and who might want it.



Safe House

Photo credit: Fox Pictures

As an action movie, “Safe House” just doesn’t work. The car chase is reasonably visceral. Cars don’t just collide, they CRASH. In fact, the entire film seems inspired as much by Paul Greengrass and his “Bourne” movies as much as the obvious inspiration of Tony Scott’s collaborations with Washington. The problem is that “Safe House” collapses in comparison to Greengrass and even Scott’s work. The car chase isn’t bad but the physical combat is sloppy. The fight scenes seem well-choreographed but they’re not well-shot as director Daniel Espinosa mistakes choppy editing for high-caliber action. And the film has a general lack of action when one thinks back on it. There are very few exciting set-pieces, especially after that “escape the house” car chase scene.

And with this little action, one is forced to reflect on the plot of “Safe House,” which is TOTAL nonsense. There’s suspension of disbelief and then there’s this movie, in which the last twenty minutes basically make no sense at all. I’m not sure if something was lost in editing or rewriting but there’s so little that seems logical about what happens in “Safe House” that one can’t take it seriously at all. And that would have been fine if it was just dumb fun. But it’s not. And so Reynolds, Washington, and the great supporting cast are stuck playing the exposition that no one really cares about. At its core, “Safe House” is an action movie with no villain. The head bad guy has no lines.

And so there’s no tension. We all know that Weston and Frost are not going to be separated for long and we know from scene one that Frost isn’t going to be a “real bad guy.” There are no risks here. Nothing to set it apart or provide much worth remembering. We remember the

action movies that refuse to play it safe. The ones that present real danger for our heroes or take chances with storytelling. “Safe House” is not worth remembering.

“Safe House” stars Denzel Washington, Ryan Reynolds, Brendan Gleeson, Vera Farmiga, Sam Shepard, Ruben Blades, and Nora Arnezeder. It was written by David Guggenheim and directed by Daniel Espinosa. It is rated R and opens on February 10th, 2012.



[14]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [15]
Content Director
[HollywoodChicago.com](#)
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [14]

Source URL (retrieved on *Mar 28 2024 - 7:16am*):
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/17396/denzel-washington-lives-in-boring-safe-house>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brendan-gleeson>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/daniel-espinosa>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/denzel-washington>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/nora-arnezeder>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/ruben-blades>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/ryan-reynolds>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/safe-house>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/sam-shepard>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/vera-farmiga>
- [14] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>