

# Despite Stylistic Inconsistency, George Clooney’s ‘Leatherheads’ Feels Good

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CHICAGO – George Clooney’s latest film, “Leatherheads,” brings light-hearted, screwball antics and slapstick blunders to the screen with a romantic tale that tells how professional football came to be.

Set in 1925, fading football star Dodge Connelly (George Clooney) attempts to save the professional game by recruiting a college football hero to save the sport. The film begins with a game of ragtag football in a stadium shared by cattle where oddball plays and dirty tricks are welcomed.



George Clooney (left) in “Leatherheads”.  
Photo credit: IMDb

Few fans come to the games and barely follow the sport – due to their often illegal consumption of booze – but when Dodge is told the team is bankrupt and the sponsors are selling, he’s determined to find a solution for his beloved team (the Duluth Bulldogs).

Dodge recruits Carter Rutherford (John Krasinski) – the Princeton football star and a war hero – to join his team and attempts to propel professional football forward by capturing the hearts of the country.

While Dodge is working to promote Carter’s good looks, amazing athletic ability and heroism, spitfire reporter Lexie Littleton (Renée Zellweger) is asked by her newspaper to discredit the war hero story by getting close to him and exposing the truth.

As Lexie hunts for her story, Dodge and Carter compete for her affection. Funny banter and mishaps galore ensue between the captain and his star player.



Renée Zellweger and George Clooney in "Leatherheads".  
*Photo credit: IMDb*

The story culminates when Lexie exposes Carter as a war hero fraud and Dodge loses his star to jealousy, which perpetuates major changes to the sport of professional football.

Typical romantic comedy calamities take place and Dodge is forced to choose between the sport he once loved – with pig-in-a-poke and crusty-bob plays – or the new woman he has fallen in love with.

Clooney and Zellweger bring great energy to the film and their back-and-forth flirtations keep the movie enthusiastic.

Lines like "I'm just practicing my American accent" to ream Clooney for not listening and "you're only as young as the women you feel" to explain age differences are riddled throughout and bring poppy yet naturally delivered humor to the story.



George Clooney shooting "Leatherheads".  
*Photo credit: IMDb*

Krasinski delivers a commendable performance as the pretty-boy football star and flawlessly follows suit with Clooney's screwball sense of humor.

Set in the roaring 1920s with prohibition and World War I themes weaved throughout, the production design is impeccable and undoubtedly places you in the stadium with the crowd. Appropriate costumes and jazzy tunes make this film not only historically accurate but colorful as well.

On the other hand, the story – just like the ragtag football team it follows – is a bit rugged and disjointed.

Director Clooney takes us into a heavy-dialogued script that's reminiscent of past Joel and Ethan Coen comedies and leads us back and forth between romantic comedy antics and slapstick horseplay. This disjointedness would be acceptable except that it causes inconsistency with its overall pace and rhythm.

At times, the film drags on around predictable plot turns and loses its overall focus. This makes it drowsy and leaves you wondering why we're watching these excessive and often tiresome scenes.

Aside from some momentum snares and trite turns, though, the film succeeds in the entertainment department. If you're looking for a movie to make you laugh and take your mind off the present day, this film will accomplish both.

*"Leatherheads" opened on April 4, 2008.*

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By [ALLISON PITACCIO](#) [12]  
Staff Writer  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[allee@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:allee@hollywoodchicago.com) [11]

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