

Pulse-Pounding Action, Complexity Define 'Easy Money'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 21, 2012 - 9:29pm

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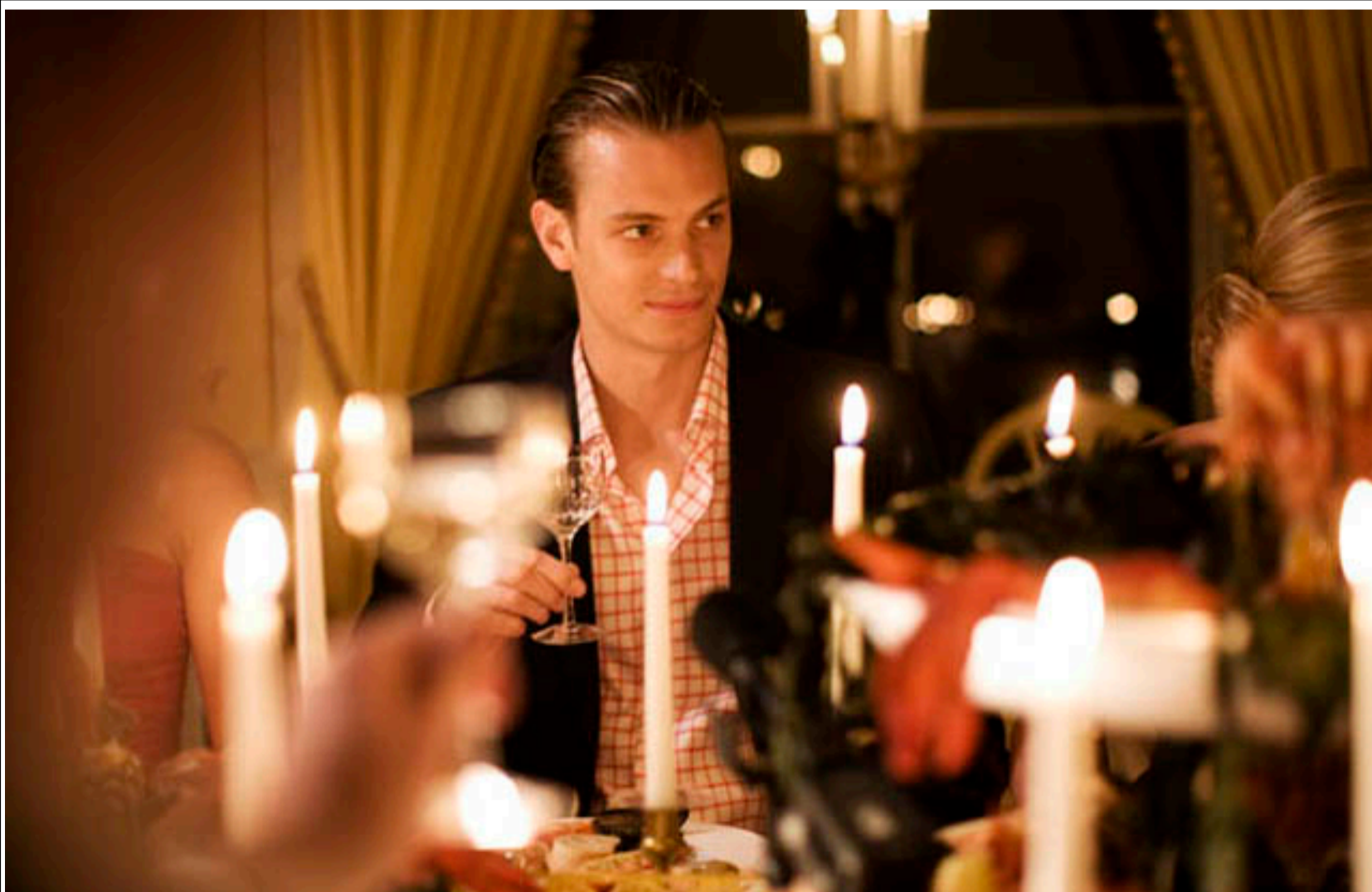


Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Desperation is the best emotion for formulating action movies. There is something basic and true about a chase, for example, or a heist gone bad, when it's the "end of the world" for a character or circumstance. "Easy Money" has that vibe, and delivers on some great sequences.

Basically a film about duplicity and karma, the film was based on a popular Swedish crime thriller novel that has the same character-driven popularity as "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo." There is also the same mystery, motivation, wealth, drama and mayhem that accompanied that painted girl, with a leading man who is a bit of anti-hero snake, but like the girl has an appeal that keeps the audience rooting for him. Martin Scorsese "presents" this film to the U.S., via The Weinstein Company, so "Easy Money" also has that recommendation going for it.

The film begins with a jail break by Jorge (Matias Padin Varela), who turns out to be a fall guy for a Yugoslavian drug cartel, and he plans to get back at them with one final high-stakes cocaine sale. This means he will cross paths with JW (Joel Kinnamen), a Stockholm business student who passes himself off as a high society jet setter, even as he drives a cab. The third person in the mix is Mrado (Dragomir Mrsic), a hitman hired by the Yugoslavians to kill Jorge. The problem for him is that he has to care for an eight year old daughter, abandoned by her drug addicted mother. The three men all seek "easy money," a big score that will get them to the next level of their lives.



JW (Joel Kinnamen) Savors the High Life in 'Easy Money'
Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

JW and his taxi boss, Abdulkarim (Mahmut Suvakci) begin to sell cocaine, and Abdulkarim becomes obsessed with finding Jorge because of his knowledge of the drug trade – the expectation is that a million dollar shipment from Germany will yield huge profits. JW uses his money society connections to set up a cash laundering deal through an investment bank, and becomes involved further by saving Jorge from a

vicious beating from the Mrado and the Yugoslavian mob. Jorge and JW become friends, and JW becomes convinced that he will never see his share of the drug trade. Mrado convinces JW to do a double cross, which results in an unforeseen turn of events.

This is a high octane crime thriller, complex in its set-up, with the payoffs coming in sudden bursts of action film energy. When the action is in the context of this type of authentic narrative setups – the drug deals, the desire for wealth and a hit man with a soft spot for a child – it is more gripping, because it has a motivation that connects much more than just action for the sake of action. As the characters hearts beat faster because of their emotional stake, it's easier for the audience to feel that beat along with them.

Casting is essential, beginning with the slicked-back-hair performance of Swedish actor Joel Kinnamen (known in America as the lead in AMC's "The Killing"). His character's desire for the wealthy lifestyle, craved further through a relationship with a society girl, is perfectly scored in the actor's bearing. His supporting henchman are the perfect combinations of crime and sensitivity, as Varela's Jorge gains JW's friendship, and Dragomir Mirsic as Mrado goes from hardened killer to vulnerable father. Director Daniel Espinosa keeps them on a desperation track that leads to a interesting and open-ended climax.

The concept of easy money is ironic, of course, because nothing is easy in maintaining wealth and power. The film shows that there is always somebody who wants what you have, and if there is a vulnerable spot to be exploited, guaranteed that the skewer will find the mark right through that spot. And crime is shown on many levels, with the investment bankers as much a criminal element as the drug dealers. What is the old saying about what is behind every great fortune?



Jorge (Matias Padin Varela) Gets Cornered in 'Easy Money'
Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

The problem with the movie is the complexity. The narrative moves as fast as the action sequences, and with the characters and their multiple deals there are some now-who-is-that? moments. Like "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," this film is multi-layered and has many motivating factors, but in "Easy Money" the focus isn't as sharp as with that other Swedish thriller. Another similarity between the two films is that there is an ongoing mystery that is evident at the end, so each can follow through with profitable sequels.

What is it with the Swedish cultural movement of late, in literature and cinema, that explores the underbelly of crime, and its underlying mystery and thrills? It might go back to Alfred Nobel, the architect of the Nobel Prize, as his fortune was made through the invention of dynamite. Boom!

"Easy Money" continues its limited release in Chicago on October 19th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Joel Kinnamen, Matias Padin Varela, Dragomir Mrsic and Mahmut Suvakci. Screenplay by Maria Karlsson. Directed by Daniel Espinosa. Rated "R"



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