

'Stand Up Guys' Worst Waste of Talent Since Booth Shot Lincoln

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 1, 2013 - 6:25pm

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Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Three actors, with three Oscars and an astounding 14 nominations between them, obviously have lost the ability to read a script late in their careers. That or the producers had dirt on them. There is no other reason why Al Pacino, Alan Arkin and Christopher Walken would be the “Stand Up Guys.”

This film is devoid of sense, reality or fun, even though it begs to have all three. It is a comedy without laughs, a drama without surprise and a redemption film without any redeeming qualities. It sits there for its 94 minutes, eliciting virtually no reaction, except “how did they get these legends to do this?” The opportunity to let these reputable guys flex their enormous range and abilities are sinfully wasted in this film, with a script that doesn't do any favors for any of the cast. Ultimately, it embarrasses all the characters, unerringly going to the lowest common denominator in each one of the relationships between the “guys” and their supporters. The production manufactures a parallel universe where no one would like to visit.

Val (Al Pacino) is getting out of jail after serving a 28 year sentence. He is being picked up by Doc (Christopher Walken), who was once the weapons expert in his gang. Doc is harboring a secret – besides making sure that Val will get some nice post-freedom partying, he has been hired by a vengeful crime boss to whack the newly freed prisoner. Yep, Doc is suppose to kill his friend within 24 hours.



Da Guys: Doc (Christopher Walken), Hirsch (Alan Arkin) and Val (Al Pacino) in 'Stand Up Guys'
Photo credit: Lionsgate

But first must come the partying, which involves kidnapping their old driver from a care facility. Hirsch (Alan Arkin), who despite being on a respirator still can drive like a movie stuntman, joins in on the fun. This concerns his daughter Nina (Julianna Margulies), but she somehow

trusts his criminal friends. The newly reformed gang break into a pharmacy, intending to steal Viagra for the horny Val, before treating him to a brothel. Val's appetite for liquor, drugs and canoodling is quite impressive, especially as his life potential ticks away. Which loyalty will become the prime motivator in whether he lives or dies?

Did the screenplay come first or did the legendary movie stars commit beforehand? It's possible that they signed up just because of the scenario, and then had to film the script that resulted. The atmosphere is certainly intriguing, with an aging hit man having to kill his ex-partner in crime the day he is released from prison. But instead of exploiting some savory story themes – the loss of youth, criminal skills and longtime loyalties – the screenplay (by Noah Haidle) and direction by Fisher Stevens chooses to make the old gang wacky pursuers of drugs and hookers. It's embarrassing for all, and lands with a clunk.

If the stars were controlling the direction of the characters, there is no doubt that Pacino wanted to be a manic horny dog. Like the Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone films before him this month, the 71 year-old Pacino prefers to express the long-lost youthful side of himself, doing things in the film that would shame a desperate 29 year old. It's always a good idea to crush pharmaceuticals and snort them, right? Maybe Viagra chipped in some money for product placement, and just cared that Pacino headed to the brothel to try it out.

The other two "guys" coast on their images, Walken with his hesitate speech style and Arkin as the irascible curmudgeon. Juliana Margulies is one of the most daunting characters written, a thankless role. Instead of calling in the authorities on the two criminals who kidnap her father, she accepts it all, even up to a point where real humans would be in mourning. Instinctively, taking advice from an ex-con and assassin might not be the way to go. The brothel is another mythical invention, with Lucy "I'll Take Any Role" Punch portraying an expansively fake hooker.



Gun Control: Christopher Walken and Al Pacino in 'Stand Up Guys'

Photo credit: Lionsgate

Another victim in this film is originality. The script and director Stevens are content to allow Pacino, Arkin and Walken to carry the film by their character clichés only, without any subtlety or development. To have the opportunity to mold and explore what these actors could do is a rare and potentially valuable experience, and to waste it on a copycat mobster story is as criminal as whatever the Pacino character did to get 28 years.

The highest level this film aspires to is having the geriatric Al Pacino brag about the number of times he has canoodled with a prostitute. When it gets to the point that the shoot-out becomes inevitable, cheering for these "guys" to be put out of our misery is the fate for three former Oscar winners.

"Stand Up Guys" opens everywhere February 1st. Featuring Al Pacino, Christopher Walken, Alan Arkin, Juliana Margulies, Mark Margolis and Lucy Punch. Written by Noah Haidle and directed by Fisher Stevens. Rated "R"



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