

## Despite Flopping as a Comic Book Movie, ‘Red 2’ Coasts By with Well-Written Characters

Submitted by [HollywoodChicago.com](http://www.hollywoodchicago.com) [1] on July 20, 2013 - 12:29pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – If you didn’t see the DC Entertainment splash screen when this “Red 2” sequel kicks off with the fake death of one of its usual suspects, you wouldn’t mind that the rest of the film feels nothing like a comic book movie except for its animated transitions between scenes.

No “comic book fan” would say this movie does the intensely cult-favorite genre any justice or holds up in even close to the same league as other DC films like “The Dark Knight,” “Watchmen” and various “Superman” attempts.



Helen Mirren stars in “Red 2”.

*Image credit: Frank Masi, SMPSP*

So despite this massive missed opportunity, abandoning that failure does allow you to find a silver lining in other redeeming qualities. In a film that packs in so many “A”-listers, this time it pays off. Each one brings a uniquely defined and mostly memorable addition to an overall story that’s somewhere in between great and too thin.

Bruce Willis (Frank) is an old fart who’s trying to be a retired CIA agent but can’t help himself from still kicking some good old bad guy ass. John Malkovich (Marvin) is his friend, partner in crime and an elite operative, too. He also can’t turn down being reunited for the shared goal of traveling the globe to track down a small nuclear device that packs a powerful punch.



John Malkovich stars in “Red 2”.

*Image credit: Frank Masi, SMPSP*

The worst part of the film and an otherwise well-written character line-up is Catherine Zeta-Jones as Katja. She plays a Russian as inauthentically as George Bush would play a woman. While she could be easily cut out, Katja does serve one purpose: a flirt who tries to come between Bruce Willis and his main squeeze Mary-Louise Parker (Sarah). Now Sarah, on the other hand, steals the show.

She doesn’t fit in with this gaggle of true criminals because she’s a delicate flower (or is she?) with no nefarious skills. And she’s trying to have a “normal” relationship with a trained killer, which provides “Red 2” with some genuinely enjoyable comedy relief. While you don’t feel throw-you-against-the-wall sexual passion, you can enjoy the comedic cuteness of this completely mismatched couple.





Mary-Louise Parker (left), Bruce Willis (middle) and John Malkovich in “Red 2”.

*Image credit: Jan Thijs*

Then there’s the 68-year-old, still-radiant Helen Mirren. Again playing against type, you can’t help but love seeing her manhandle weapons with a placid demeanor that appear too heavy for her to carry.

Along with a just-right Mary-Louise Parker and Helen Mirren, a 76-year-old Anthony Hopkins (Bailey) plays the pleasurable mad scientist who’s locked up in the loony bin (or is he?) after harnessing “red mercury”. It’s a bomb that could shift the power of global terrorism over night.



Bruce Willis (left) and Byung-hun Lee in “Red 2”.

*Image credit: Frank Masi, SMPSP*

When you add them all up and include “The Matrix”-like fighting skills of “world’s best hitman” Byung-hun Lee (who plays Han Cho Bai), you get a film that’s stronger with each character it has successfully defined than the overall movie it has created with them.



Their collective mission feels forced, uninspired and much like a common Hollywood plot that's trying to earn its keep as a decent popcorn flick. But it's not nearly as interesting as the quirks and intricacies of each character, which will be enjoyed by “Red 2” moviegoers even if they didn't see 2010's “[Red](#) [24]”.



Catherine Zeta-Jones in “Red 2”.

Image credit: Frank Masi, SMPSP

Behind the scenes, two of the main stars of “Red 2” are character writers Warren Ellis (“Red,” “Iron Man 3”) and Cully Hamner (“Red”). The film is again written by the brotherly duo Jon Hoeber and Erich Hoeber (who wrote “Red,” Kate Beckinsale’s “Whiteout” and 2012’s “Battleship”). But while its characters end up being the film’s primary saving grace, “Red 2” (an acronym for “**R**etired, **E**xtrremely **D**angerous”) is most adversely knocked in its purpose for being there.

You get the feeling this team didn't need to return to the screen. Instead, they only did to be employed again and to build more of a franchise from a first film that earned \$199 million worldwide on a production budget of \$58 million. “Red 2” increased its production budget to \$84 million, but in many ways felt like an excuse just to do it all over again rather than a well-scripted need to return for further fleshing out.

*“Red 2” stars Bruce Willis, John Malkovich, Mary-Louise Parker, Helen Mirren, Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Byung-hun Lee, Jong Kun Lee, Neal McDonough, David Thewlis, Garrick Hagon, Tim Pigott-Smith, Brian Cox, Philip Arditti and Mitchell Mullen from director Dean Parisot and writers Jon Hoeber and Erich Hoeber. The film, which opened on July 19, 2013, has a running time of 116 minutes. It is rated “PG-13” for pervasive action and violence including frenetic gunplay and for some language and drug material.*



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