

Lazy, Horrendous ‘Paranoia’ Wastes Talented Cast

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 15, 2013 - 12:35pm

- [Amber Heard](#) [2]
- [Embeth Davidtz](#) [3]
- [Film Review](#) [4]
- [Gary Oldman](#) [5]
- [Harrison Ford](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Josh Holloway](#) [8]
- [Julian McMahon](#) [9]
- [Liam Hemsworth](#) [10]
- [Paranoia](#) [11]
- [Richard Dreyfuss](#) [12]
- [Robert Luketic](#) [13]



Rating: **1.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Much like 2011’s silly “Abduction” with Taylor Lautner, the title of “Paranoia” isn’t exactly accurate. Just as that previous film wasn’t really about an abduction, paranoia is only a minor aspect of Robert Luketic’s new thriller. It’s more about corporate intrigue, theft, intellectual property, and fear. It’s not really paranoia if your life is literally threatened multiple times. It’s just another inaccurate, buzz-word title. They should have called “Nonsense.” Or “Laziness.” Or “Paycheck.” Whatever they called it, this is an inexcusably awful film, a movie made by people who should know better for an audience that they think will be just barely satisfied enough not to revolt. There’s no sense of craftsmanship or creativity here, just the bare minimum to meet enough clichés to get to the final act and send you on your way. It has all the thrills of a root canal.

One of many, many structural problems with the script for “Paranoia” is that lead character Adam Cassidy (Liam Hemsworth) is introduced with little redemptive characteristics other than he takes care of his sick dad (Richard Dreyfuss). He’s not very good at his job, thinks a lot of himself, and screws up a presentation to the point that he gets himself and his friends at tech company Ethion fired. Instead of figuring out how to climb the corporate ladder and earn what he receives by doing so, he takes his buddies out to party on the not-yet-cancelled (and, apparently, unlimited) corporate credit card. He racks up \$16k in party expenses and ends up sleeping with a beautiful marketing exec named Emma (Amber Heard).



Paranoia

Photo credit: *Relativity Media*

The next day, Adam’s old boss, Nicolas Wyatt (Gary Oldman), comes looking for his money. With the help of right-hand woman Judith (Embeth Davidtz) and muscle Miles Meechum (a hilariously-overacting Julian McMahon), Wyatt essentially blackmails Adam into the world of corporate intrigue. Adam will go to work for Eikon, Ethion’s biggest competitor and the company run by Wyatt’s old business partner, Jock Goddard (Harrison Ford). Again, Luketic and writers Jason Hall and Barry L. Levy lazily shoot themselves in the foot by not setting up what the arc of this character is supposed to be. Is he being blackmailed to a degree that we should see him as a victim of corporate malfeasance? Or is this a tale like “Wall Street” of a young man shown how the other half lives and embracing it? Neither narrative is established and so Adam becomes little more than a selfish jerk, the kind of guy who leaves his friends and moral code behind for a fancy car. But Luketic doesn’t even make that plotline work since there’s no joy in Adam finding the good life.

Of course, “Paranoia” is a film of double crosses and illegal behavior but none of it feels like it takes place in anything resembling the real world. We’re supposed to believe that Wyatt and Goddard are powerful enough to destroy Adam’s life and even kill those he loves and yet their power is often shown by McMahon chasing Hemsworth down crowded streets like an ordinary thug. It’s a film in which we’re supposed to see Cassidy as a genius who never got the chance at a major corporation and yet he does some of the dumbest things you’ll see on film this year, including the most poorly-planned heist in info tech history.

As you can probably tell, “Paranoia” is a film in which there exists no one to root for or care about. When characters are threatening to send each other to jail and being behind bars is what they BOTH deserve, it feels like someone has missed Screenwriting 101. Hemsworth is not an engaging protagonist, his romance with Heard is pure window-dressing, and even scenes between Ford & Oldman don’t crackle with the energy they would have had years ago when both actors probably wouldn’t have taken these roles.



Paranoia

Photo credit: Relativity Media

At one point, when the characters were reiterating the plot for the umpteenth time (Luketic and his writers love to tell us the same information repeatedly as if that increases tension), I started to think about the iconic roles of the actors in this film. Oldman brings a little bit of malevolent energy to the piece (he’s the only mildly redeeming quality overall in the film) but it’s a piece of work so far below the talent level of this living legend that it’s just depressing. And then one considers the legacy of actors like Dreyfuss and Ford. I wondered if that kid who wanted to be Han Solo could have looked into a crystal ball and seen this lazy nonsense if he’d even believe it was a possible future. This is how the mind wanders during a movie this lackluster. “What would the 13-year-old me think of this nonsense?”

I understand that some movies are made purely for profit. I get that the people involved in the production probably thought at some point that they were making a reasonably diverting slice of escapism. However, it went wrong long before production ended. At a certain point, people involved stopped trying. And that’s unacceptable, especially as ticket costs increase and the recession continues. You can’t reward their laziness with a shoulder shrug when so many people can’t afford a night at the movies. It almost feels like a conspiracy to keep film goes from asking for more effort from Hollywood. Maybe I’m just being paranoid.

“Paranoia” stars Liam Hemsworth, Amber Heard, Embeth Davidtz, Julian McMahon, Josh Holloway, Gary Oldman, Richard Dreyfuss, and Harrison Ford. It was directed by Robert Luketic and opens on August 16, 2013.



[14]

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