

Melissa McCarthy, Sandra Bullock Fuel 'The Heat'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 27, 2013 - 9:51am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – An incredibly talented ensemble elevates a pretty pedestrian script in the just-funny-enough “The Heat,” a movie that gets better as it goes along, largely because its two mega-talented stars carry it over some mediocre patches of writing. Melissa McCarthy and Sandra Bullock simply have unimpeachable comic timing. They know how to work a joke, hit a punchline, and inject just enough character to make it feel three-dimensional. They’re reason enough to see “The Heat,” even if one wishes the film around them was up to their talents.

FBI Agent Ashburn (Bullock) doesn’t have a lot of friends, on the force or otherwise. She’s one of those Type-A personalities who seems to take a bit too much joy in getting every detail of a case exactly right, down to shaming the drug-sniffing dog who misses out on the stash she finds instead. No one is good enough to work with Ashburn, which has made her a damn good crime-solver but also the kind of person that no one at the FBI wants to work with. When the time comes to promote Ashburn, her boss (Demian Bichir), is hesitant to do so. She doesn’t play well with others.



The Heat

Photo credit: Fox

The symmetry of "The Heat" comes from the fact that Boston cop Mullins (McCarthy) also doesn't play well with others but for the exact opposite personality reasons. She's the bull in the china shop to Ashburn's precision approach. Ashburn is forced to work with Mullins when the latter catches a case in her district that may be the key to catching a notorious crime lord. Marlon Wayans co-stars as Ashburn's local contact in Boston while Michael Rapaport plays Mullins's brother, a guy who can't stay out of jail. Jane Curtin, Bill Burr, Dan Bakkedahl, Michael McDonald, and Taran Killam fill out a talented supporting cast.

And yet it is never in doubt to whom this film belongs. Bullock and/or McCarthy are in every scene, driving the film in the way that Nick Nolte & Eddie Murphy drove "48 Hours" or Charles Grodin & Robert DeNiro drove "Midnight Run." It is a piece built around their already-known comedic personas that allows both actresses to play in their wheelhouses but also prove their comedic chops in ways that other directors don't allow. "Identity Thief" and "The Proposal" are good examples of films that build on the reputation of their stars and do nothing unexpected at all from that point. "The Heat" works because it starts with the basics of what we expect from McCarthy & Bullock and then allows them to take unexpected turns. The second half of the film, in which Bullock's Ashburn loosens up and McCarthy's tough chick gets more vulnerable, is much stronger than the first as it takes the clichés and set-up in new directions.



The Heat

Photo credit: Fox

I wish Katie Dippold's script took more chances. The film is nearly two hours long and spins its wheels a few too many times in those set-up chapters to be forgiven. It's far too long before the bickering duo becomes the crime-solving team that we know they will eventually be. Why not take a risk and have Ashburn & Mullins work together from the beginning? "The Heat" actually becomes something of a feminist piece in the final act in that nearly every male cop character (and most male characters, period) is a complete moron. I loved that aspect of "The Heat" and wished the film had gotten there earlier. The inevitable sequel could easily be better.

It's not unusual for a comedy to rise above its script through the star power of the people cast in it. Eddie Murphy did it a few times. The timeless comedies, the ones we come back to over and over again, aren't star vehicles but brilliant scripts. "The Heat" is more of a star vehicle. While that's a bit disappointing given the talents of its cast and director, it's a fun vehicle to drive in a year when good comedies have been depressingly rare.

"The Heat" stars Melissa McCarthy, Sandra Bullock, Demian Bichir, Marlon Wayans, Michael Rapaport, Jane Curtin, Spoken Reasons, Dan Bakkedahl, Taran Killam, and Michael McDonald. It was written by Katie Dippold and directed by Paul Feig. It will be released tomorrow, June 28, 2013.



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