

Scorsese's 'The Wolf of Wall Street' a Deliciously Gluttonous Inspection Into Our Demons

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Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – No matter how painfully bad it may be, I never walk out of a screening. It's a professional rule I've set and keep it at all costs. But with Martin Scorsese's latest stroke of genius, I experienced a kind of pain I don't usually wrangle with: the survival of my bladder.

I don't even recall it being as much of an issue with the 3.25-hour "Schindler's List," but for the 3-hour "The Wolf of Wall Street," I just almost didn't make it. Even though it was a mad rush to the bathroom the second the credits hit, thankfully the true story of Jordan Belfort kept me completely distracted and entertained at the behest of my bodily needs.



Margot Robbie is Naomi Lapaglia and Leonardo DiCaprio is Jordan Belfort in "The Wolf of Wall Street".

Image credit: Mary Cybulski, Paramount Pictures

But really, folks. Take care of your bladder before it starts and don't drink. This movie is long, and while you'll enjoy most of its 180 minutes, it does feel a bit too lengthy and should have gone back to the editing room. Scorsese is addicted to each frame, and just like the greed his leading man exudes, he seems unable to cut back some scenes that should have been.

Scorsese has again teamed up with his golden-paycheck lead Leonardo DiCaprio, which over the past decade he has done every few years. The duo last wowed audiences in 2010 with "Shutter Island" and before that did so with 2006's "The Departed," 2004's "The Aviator" and 2002's "Gangs of New York". Each film has been nominated for or has won at least one Oscar (except for "Shutter Island"). The only major film Scorsese has done during that time without DiCaprio is 2011's "Hugo".

Like we've seen him over the top and larger than life in 2013's "The Great Gatsby" and "Titanic," this time DiCaprio is living in the everyman's fantasy world. He can do or say anything he pleases, buy anything he wants, snort lines of cocaine or any drug that's in front of him, sleep with any woman he chooses and rake in money in his sleep. But at what consequence? While you know his crash looms, you're so engrossed in the meantime that you don't care.



Office party. Jonah Hill (far right) is Donnie Azoff in "The Wolf of Wall Street".

Image credit: Mary Cybulski, Paramount Pictures

Scorsese casts DiCaprio in a lead role no one else could have played better. He also perfectly places the relatively unknown Margot Robbie as his offensively hot and sexually manipulative (second) wife. Robbie was recently seen in the 2013 Rachel McAdams film "About Time".

Rounding out the cast is DiCaprio's comedy henchmen Jonah Hill and P.J. Byrne. Matthew McConaughey fittingly helps to create the monster that DiCaprio becomes, Rob Reiner delightfully plays his father, Kyle Chandler passes as the FBI guy who you're supposed to fear and "Iron Man" director Jon Favreau has a small and forgettable part as a securities lawyer.

Based on the book of the same name by Jordan Belfort, "The Wolf of Wall Street" documents his rise from a garage trader to a wealthy, high-life stockbroker. The film draws inspiration from movies like Al Pacino's "Scarface" – with the cocaine and obsession for money, women and power – and you always know his fall is coming. Its Christmas release is timed interestingly with the opening just 5 days earlier of another crime film: David O. Russell's "American Hustle," which has taken Best Picture by New York film critics and is receiving rave reviews. But "Wolf" is a far superior film overall.



Margot Robbie and Leonardo DiCaprio in "The Wolf of Wall Street".

Image credit: Mary Cybulski, Paramount Pictures

The problem with being an illegal heavy hitter is it doesn't take long for the government to be breathing down your neck. Nonetheless, Jordan Belfort's story of crime and corruption is one that nearly none of us can relate to while simultaneously being one that nearly all of us would like to dabble in.

How would you like to have so much money that you could throw it overboard at the FBI from your gold-lined yacht? Or drive your exotic car home in one piece (or so you think) while being doped up on Quaaludes? Or marry one of the sexiest women alive? Or be the business leader all your friends wish they could be? Or never take no for an answer? Or barely bat an eye when a private jet explodes trying to rescue you?

This isn't a film you need to believe in. It's a film you need to let yourself go for so you enjoy. It doesn't take place in the real life of anyone you know. While much of this is real in Jordan Belfort's life and some of it was certainly embellished by Hollywood, the film does start to lose its authenticity even within its ridiculous reality when the always amped-up, doped-up DiCaprio has a moment of clarity about his daughter.



Left to right: Katarina Cas, Jonah Hill, Leonardo DiCaprio, Margot Robbie and Jon Bernthal in “The Wolf of Wall Street”.
Image credit: Mary Cybulski, Paramount Pictures

You always get the sense that he does care for her amid his reckless, big-baller lifestyle. Still, the film makes a quick switch when his wife – who always tolerates the over-the-top man he is – decides she’s fed up, he’s not a capable father (since when was he ever?) and she wants the kid. And DiCaprio suddenly wants to fight for his daughter but is willing to let his wife run away.

I could suspend my belief for everything else in his fantasy world, but I can’t get on board with this emotional progression. But that being the biggest downfall this film has (along with it needing to be cut by about 30 minutes), what remains is one of the best films of 2013 and one of the funniest, most enjoyable movies I’ve seen in some time.

“The Wolf of Wall Street” stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Jonah Hill, Margot Robbie, Matthew McConaughey, Kyle Chandler, Rob Reiner, Jon Favreau, P.J. Byrne, Jon Bernthal, Jean Dujardin, Joanna Lumley, Cristin Milioti, Christine Ebersole and Shea Whigham from director Martin Scorsese and writer Terence Winter based on the book by Jordan Belfort. The film, which has a run time of 180 minutes and opened on Dec. 25, 2013, is rated “R” for sequences of strong sexual content, graphic nudity, drug use and language throughout and for some violence.



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