

‘Let’s Be Cops’ Unoriginally Repeats Old Formulas

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 13, 2014 - 12:47pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – The premise is sound, but the new film “Let’s Be Cops” refuses to do something original with the premise of a couple of regular Joes pretending to be Johnny Law. The same stale jokes and inevitable need for heroic action climax overwhelms the mild amusement of it all.

Jokes about horny boys, marijuana, horny ladies, mistaken identities and obsession with ridiculous minutiae – like having the boys involved in a “case” – limit the enjoyment of the two lead actors. Damon Wayans Jr. handles smart comedy much better than the physical or character variety, and is miscast, and his partner Jake Johnson practically sweats blood to deliver the scenario, going off in directions that quite frankly would have him spend jail time in the real world. Will there be a wacky arrest that the fakers have to do? Yes, and it will be extreme, though bizarrely funny. In essence, “Let’s Be Cops” is a new idea that relies on old cop comedy standards, without stepping into the current police state.

Ryan (Jake Johnson) and Justin (Damon Wayans Jr.) have the movie jobs of actor and video game developer, but their lives in Los Angeles at 30 years old are going nowhere. When they mistake a masquerade ball for a costume party, they end up dressed as cops (Ryan had the costumes from a video shoot). Naturally, the general population thinks they’re real cops, and their lives suddenly change.



Justin (Damon Wayans Jr.) and Ryan (Jake Johnson) in ‘Let’s Be Cops’

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

Ryan becomes obsessed with his new role, and takes it extreme proportions, including buying a cop car on ebay and dressing it to look like a Los Angeles law enforcement vehicle – so much for the starving artist – and gets into his role by studying procedural videos online. Justin is reluctant, but goes along because he gets attention from the fetching Josie (Nina Dobrev). Meanwhile, Officer Segars (Rob Riggle) gets the non-cops involved in a real case involving crime boss Brolin (Andy Garcia), and their fakery is about to be tested.

There is a current debate in this country about the militarization of the police force, and the excessive means for controlling the populace. There is no commentary about that in “Let’s Be Cops,” as the standard good law versus evil crime lords becomes the norm. Some expression of satire in that arena could have helped this film, or at least given it something to hang its hat on, rather than the other less amusing comic arrest that has them breaking up a woman-to-woman catfight (done much funnier elsewhere), for example.

The leads are fascinating, especially as to how they approach the very high concept material. Jake Johnson is a funny and subtle actor, and his super octane performance has a bit of wink-at-the-camera to it, but Wayans seems to be trapped in his role, even to the point of taking on wacky characters – like his Wayan Brothers father and uncles – which don’t fit his rather straight-laced acting style. He also sounds inappropriate doling out the usual profanity expected in an “R” rated comedy, like an Ivy League professor doing gangsta rap.

The supporting characters run the gamut from bemused surprise (Rob Riggle) to I-need-something-to-grasp-onto confusion (Andy Garcia). Nina Dobrev portrays the girlfriend with memorable presence in her actress/model looks, and comedian Natasha Leggero goes so full on as a horny cop groupie, that again there is some camera winking going on. Her and Johnson want to steer the movie in another direction, but the writer/director Luke Greenfield seems satisfied to do a faux “Beverly Hills Cop” type comedy.



Rob Riggle is Office Segars in ‘Let’s Be Cops’

Photo credit: 20th Century Fox

What becomes distressing in these kind of cop films, is the need to give the comedy guys (either these fake cops or Eddie Murphy in BHC) a real case, with shoot-outs and the like. In BHC, it was more reliable, because of the way they established Eddie’s character. In “Let’s Be Cops,” it becomes counterproductive and rather dull, and takes whatever potential the film might have had and takes it off the rails. This wasn’t previewed for film critics in Chicago, which is a kiss of non-confidence in what they’re presenting.

But why analyze something like this seriously? It does has moments of farce that provide some chuckles, and the lead/supporting actors are all decent enough comic pros – even Andy Garcia – to know a bit about delivery, and together they barely avoid the final grade of D.O.A, 10-4, over and out.

“Let’s Be Cops” opens everywhere on August 13th. Featuring Damon Wayans Jr., Jake Johnson, Rob Riggle, James D’Arcy, Nina Dobrev, Natasha Leggero and Andy Garcia. Written by Luke Greenfield and Nicholas Thomas. Directed by Luke Greenfield. Rated “R”



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