

‘Suburbicon’ is the Cinematic Equivalent of a Soccer Mom

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on October 27, 2017 - 2:20pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Having lived in both the suburbs and in major cities throughout my lifetime, I can say without hesitation that the suburbs tend to be dull, boring and bereft of creativity. To be fair, it’s not their fault since they’re built for efficiency and with placidity in mind. “Suburbicon” is made in much the same way, becoming the one thing a film shouldn’t be: boring.

In the film industry, George Clooney is considered the equivalent of a Renaissance Man. He can act, write, and direct a film with the best of them, often taking on more than one simultaneously. Nothing seems like too much for this man to handle, that is, until he came across this Coen Brothers script. Joel and Ethan Cohen have delivered over a dozen films that tackle social complexities and mix them in with a complex tone that tends to be a hybrid of serious drama and humorous antics. On paper, the script may read one way, but only the writer(s) really know the true intentions behind the words, and that’s where Clooney was beyond his capacity.



Nothing is idyllic in ‘Suburbicon’

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

True to Cohen Brothers style, “Suburbicon” showed glimpses of a Hitchcockian suspense-thriller meant to have comedic flourishes throughout. The execution of this aspiring dark comedy, on the other hand, made sure that only the “dark” part of the film translated on screen, while the “comedy” portion received a different kind of execution, making it dead on arrival. What we ended up with was a painfully plain film that is so blunt, straightforward and bereft of nuance that it might as well be the 45th President of the United States. There’s even a metaphor throughout the film that depicts the barbaric treatment of some new residents of color in this all-white suburb, hiding behind the

guise of community safety. This is meant to highlight the existing problems in the community, and how the Lodge's (an average white, American family) are doing more harm to their community than the new family ever could.

We get it, the social commentary is obvious and it is one of the few redeemable parts of this film, but we have seen this type of comment on society many times before. "Suburbicon" fails to take this further, just sticking to the obvious, low-hanging fruit that the metaphor provides. Even then, this metaphor feels secondary to the story of the Lodge's when it should be its equal and not treated like an afterthought. Because of that, the film as a whole feels like it places an emphasis in the wrong places, leaving us to take the story of the Lodge's mostly at face value, turning the film into something unremarkable.



Sinister things happen in the suburbs in 'Suburbicon'

Photo credit: Paramount Pictures

Clooney and frequent writing partner Grant Heslov also had a part in the penning of this screenplay, and their influence/corruption is apparent, but even then, "Suburbicon" still stood a chance. In this film's case, the problem wasn't so much the way the script was written, but in how it was interpreted on screen, which is where director George Clooney comes in. He tries to channel the styles of prominent filmmakers from the time period our story takes place (the 1950's), like Alfred Hitchcock and Elia Kazan, but fails to understand how to recreate the effects and settles with cheaply imitating. Creating a compelling mystery is a much about what you show the audience as what you decide to leave hidden. The thrill is in the journey as the audience is taken on a ride and meant to be active participants in deciphering the clues like a private detective. At no point does Clooney build suspense or intrigue, but instead takes a straightforward approach by showing us all the cards he's holding early on, sealing the fate of his characters and the film.

This film's death came in the form of its complacency. It never strived to be more than the words on the script, but the performers tried their best to breathe life into it. Matt Damon, Julianne Moore, and even Oscar Isaac (despite his small role), all perform with the same commitment to their characters that we have come to expect from them. Noah Jupe, who plays the son Nicky, delivers the most affecting performance in the film. He is the lens through which we are meant to experience everything, and as such brings the brunt of the film's emotional impact. Unfortunately, his sympathetic character isn't enough to save this film's uninspired approach, watered-down social commentary, and lack of story-building suspense, making "Suburbicon" the film equivalent of a soccer mom.

"Suburbicon" opens everywhere on October 27th. Featuring Matt Damon, Julianne Moore, Noah Jupe and Oscar Isaac. Written by Joel Cohen, Ethan Cohen, George Clooney and Grant Heslov. Directed by George Clooney. Rated "R"



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