

‘All the Money in the World’ Has a Soft Landing

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 21, 2017 - 1:52pm

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – A bitter and old rich man won’t take responsibility for the co-opting of something he is directly connected to. Is this the Trump administration or “All the Money in the World”? Christopher Plummer portrays mogul J. Paul Getty, trying to steer clear of his grandson’s kidnapping.

The film, in the end, might be known more for the casting switch of Kevin Spacey as J. Paul to Christopher Plummer, eight weeks before the scheduled opening. When Spacey was ostracized for alleged sexual misconduct, director Ridley Scott remarkably assembled the rest of the cast, re-shot scenes with Plummer as Getty and made the opening date deadline. The film doesn’t skip a beat in this reassembling, nor does it do any more that just relate the case of the kidnapping, and the elder Getty’s reluctance to give up a thin dime to help his relative. Although a true story, the captivity itself was at a TV movie level, while the immorality of wealth could have been better exploited.

J. Paul Getty the Third (Charlie Plummer) is a randy teenager in Rome, when he is kidnapped by a group of various criminals in 1973. His mother Gail (Michelle Williams) is distraught, especially when the kidnappers want \$17 million dollars from the funds of her ex-father-in-law J. Paul Getty (Christopher Plummer).



J. Paul Getty (Christopher Plummer) in ‘All the Money in the World’

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

The story of the family Petty is told in flashbacks, as the elder J. Paul is depicted as a ruthless businessman, and the richest man in history. His family connections are virtually nil, and he feels no responsibility for providing the ransom for his grandson's release. He does put a Fixer (Mark Wahlberg) on the case to help Gail, but the ultimate decision for resolution lies with the old miser.

The film flits between being a procedural of the kidnapping, which is mostly standard, to a treatise on the relativity of money in J. Paul Getty's purview. Getty is portrayed as a very strange man when it comes to his fortune, preferring the company of material possessions to family. These moments are the most fascinating in the film, and I couldn't help think that Kevin Spacey might have been able to communicate it better than Christopher Plummer. Plummer will forever be categorized as "the second Getty" in the film's notoriety, and his workman-like performance is unremarkable.

Michelle Williams works hard to prop up the film as the harried mother, between two worlds. Her character frustration is honest, amid a slew of paparazzi constantly following her around Italy. Williams always has a talent for making more from less. Mark Wahlberg is fascinating as well, in what is essentially a character role. Why does a leading man, mostly action and comedy oriented, take on a supporting role as a bland fixer? It must have screamed "important career transition," but does nothing for him in that positioning.



Gail (Michelle Williams) and the Fixer (Mark Wahlberg) in 'All the Money in the World'

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Classics

The career of Ridley Scott is also fascinating. The 80-year-old's 41 film run as a director includes the Alien series, "G.I. Jane" and the populist "The Martian." He never coasts on a genre, which he could have done with his early science fiction. But there needed to be something more in this exploration... focusing on the captivity and negotiation of the kidnapping seemed to overwhelm any themes of what wealth means in the context of the film. The conclusion is also a bit of a rip-off from "Citizen Kane," but Scott is old enough to get away with it, I suppose.

The elder Getty got rich on oil, black gold, Texas Tea. He would be gobsmacked by the possibilities of wealth in the current age, where a mere tech engineer can become the richest man in history. Would J. Paul invest in Facebook or simply have an account? All the money in the world can't answer that question.

"All the Money in the World" opens everywhere on December 25th. Featuring Michelle Williams, Christopher Plummer, Mark Wahlberg, Charlie Plummer, and Timothy Hutton. Screenplay adapted by David Scarpa. Directed by Ridley Scott. Rated "R"



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