

Strange '15:17 to Paris' Can't Make the Connection

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 11, 2018 - 12:48pm

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – What's up with Clint Eastwood, and why in the Sam Hill did he attach himself as director to this film? Also, why was the decision made to use the actual rescuers as the actors in a true terrorist train incident? Nothing adds up in the strangely disconnected "15:17 to Paris."

Before the train heroics, there are three major acts of this film. First, a childhood backstory for the three eventual heroes, which is about as awkward as it sounds, and contains odd castings of B-level TV "names." Second, the real dudes take over the story of their lives, and it illogically focuses on Spencer Stone and his journey through the Air Force. Third, and the gosh darn weirdest part, is the travelogue that two of the dudes take before they meet up with the third hero in Amsterdam, and board the ill-fated train together. The length and detail of two non-actors trying to prop up scenes, while being tourists, is pure torture. Oh why Clint, did you torture me?

Spencer Stone, Anthony Sadler and Alek Skarlatos (eventually playing themselves) are childhood friends who can't help but get into mischief at their Christian school. Spencer and Alek's mothers (Judy Greer and Jenna Fischer) think their antics are proper schoolboy hijinks, but Principal Akers (Thomas Lennon) has another viewpoint. Eventually, Alek moves away, but the three keep in touch through young adulthood.



In His Life: Spencer Stone (front) and Anthony Sadler Take the '15:17 to Paris'

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

Spencer Stone wants to be a military specialist, but keeps failing the various sections of the testing. He eventually ends up in survival training, and has a hiatus that he wants to share with his friends. He calls Anthony to join him for a European vacation, one where they will eventually hook up with Alek in Amsterdam. Their next destination is Paris, after a short train ride.

The approach to this story is based on the memoir the three wrote about the thwarting of a gunman's attempt to take over that train. But really, after seeing the film version the book must be torture as well. Screenwriter Dorothy Blyskal obviously had nothing to work with, as the backstory, young adult section and travelogue was as flat as the earth was once was thought to be. Trying to make hay out of a morose Christian boy bugging out on an Air Force exam had to be harder than solving the math problem in "Good Will Hunting."

Clint made a huge mistake using the real people to portray themselves... they will be eternally made fun of for the rest of their lives for it. These dudes were so tight they couldn't even make a non-dialogue party scene in Amsterdam look fun... in Amsterdam! Their bad acting even minimized the final heroic actions, as I couldn't help but think that Spencer Stone had a hard time handling the smallest instances of his supposedly true story, so why should the train act be true? There was not one of the three that were a better actor than the other, all their amateurism showed. The investors must have freaked out when they saw this result.



Actors! Alek Skarlatos (left), Sadler and Stone on the ‘15:17 to Paris’
Photo credit: Warner Bros.

And oy, that travelogue! There was a good third of the film taken up with two galoots traipsing through Italy and Venice with no clue to the atmosphere... the comedy “bit” was a selfie stick. You’ve been warned. The backstory portion had to be the compromise for the galoots portraying themselves. Jenna Fischer (“The Office”) portrays a Christian Mom so weirdly it’s like she was drugged. Judy Greer is a bit better, but not by much, and Thomas Lennon looked like he sucked lemons before each scene. It’s absurd, and almost insulting, to any of the real life ordinary “folks.”

The train incident was heroic, so why not an exploration of the whys behind the act rather than the dudes who saved the day? If the book doesn’t work as a film, throw it out and film something else. Didn’t Sam Goldwyn say that? Does anybody remember Sam Goldwyn? Does anyone remember driving a Ford Frick? “My baby takes the Paris train...”

“15:17 to Paris” opens everywhere on February 9th. Featuring Spencer Stone, Anthony Sadler, Alek Skarlatos, Thomas Lennon, Jenna Fischer and Judy Greer. Screenplay adapted by Dorothy Blyskal. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Rated “PG-13”



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Source URL (retrieved on Apr 19 2024 - 8:50pm):
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