

'Hustlers' Is Flashy But Empty Stripper Crime Caper

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on September 14, 2019 - 11:43am

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Rating: **3.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – This stripper crime caper is flashy, buffed to a high gloss, and more entertaining and watchable than it has any right to be. But it's never quite as smart, or layered as it seems to think it is.

Constance Wu from "Crazy Rich Asians" stars as the proverbial stripper with a heart of gold, Destiny.

She's just doing it to help take care of her grandma but finds that working the pole alone won't pay the bills. At the New York Club modeled after the Manhattan nightspot Scores, queen bee Jennifer Lopez takes her under her wing to show her the moves. This film is a sisterhood tale wrapped up in larceny and dollar bills. Lopez gets a meaty role tailor-made to her like a sequined bodysuit. It starts with Lopez showing Wu how to get into the VIP champagne room and milk the marks for all their worth. When the financial crisis happens, the regular strip club business dries up so the girls have to improvise. Lopez comes up with a can't miss premise. They'll hook the Wall Street types on their own, slip 'em some drugs, and then max out their credit cards at the club.



Photo credit: STX Films

Lopez plays Romona like the godfather of a criminal enterprise. She's equal parts ruthless, and positively benevolent to those who she takes a liking too. The film bends over backward, tying itself into knots to make the girls themselves, and Lopez in particular into someone worth rooting for as they go on lavish spending sprees with stolen loot. Lopez spreads so much wealth around to her girls and their families and their kids, the only surprise is that her character isn't literally named "Angel."

The marks are a largely anonymous collection of Wall Street douchebags, but it's clear we're not supposed to feel sorry for the victims. As Lopez frequently rationalizes, these girls are just stealing from guys who already stole their ill-gotten gains. There's undoubtedly a meaty story to be told here, but this film never manages to even scratch the surface. We're supposed to root for these characters, but the film's point of view basically boils down to strippers are people too and they're out to even the score.



Photo credit: STX Films

There have been plenty of crime capers full of morally compromised protagonists, and wu serves as the necessary conscience of the group. She's ripping people off, but at least she kinda feels bad about it. Lopez has no such moral qualms. And we're supposed to cheer for her while she blows her ill-gotten gains on designer furs, SUV's, and the deluxe apartment in the sky. But other than the fact that its JLo playing her, there's not much to any of these characters.

Music superstars of the moment, Lizzo and Cardi B get a lot of play in the trailers but get a combined about 5 minutes of screen time. All in all, "Hustlers" is watchable enough, but it never gets to that next level to make it more than just another forgettable night in a darkened room.

"Hustlers" opens everywhere on September 13th. Featuring Jennifer Lopez, Constance Wu, Lizzo, Cardi B, Julia Styles, Keke Palmer, Lili Reinhart, Wai Ching Ho, and Mercedes Ruehl. Screenplay by Lorene Scafaria. Directed by Lorene Scafaria. Rated "R"



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