

Like a Bad 'Law & Order,' 'Righteous Kill' With Al Pacino, Robert De Niro Lacks 'Heat'

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – Last fall, Francis Ford Coppola made the comment that Al Pacino and Robert De Niro (along with Jack Nicholson) had lost their ambition. Coppola essentially said they have been phoning in their performances and picking safer movies. "Righteous Kill" could be the case study to that argument.

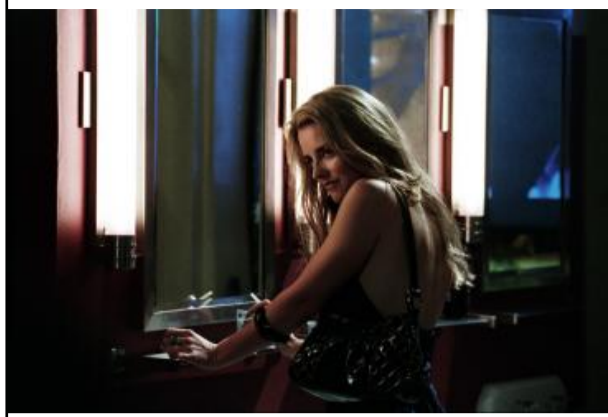


Left to right: Robert De Niro and Al Pacino in "Righteous Kill".

Photo credit: Righteous Productions, Inc.

You have Pacino and De Niro together again. They're both playing a cop, which is a role they've both done time and time again. You give them a script from Russell Gewirtz (who scribed the amazing film "Inside Man"). What could go wrong? As "Righteous Kill" proves,

apparently many things.



Trilby Glover in "Righteous Kill".
Photo credit: Righteous Productions, Inc.

Officers "Turk" (Robert De Niro) and "Rooster" (Al Pacino) are partners who have each been with the New York Police Department for 30 years. Their latest case is to catch a serial killer offing the criminals the justice system has let slip through the cracks.

Each serial murder is accompanied with a poem detailing the offenses committed by these lowlifes and why their murder is (sigh) "righteous". Fellow detectives played by John Leguizamo and Donnie Wahlberg (yes, the older brother of Mark Wahlberg) are also on the case along with Carla Gugino.

She portrays a sexy and sassy officer who's sleeping with Turk. The story is told as a flashback that's narrated by video confession by Robert De Niro's character.

That means you either immediately know he's the killer or you've got a wild twist coming at the end. The story follows most of the murders leading up to the confession and Turk and Rooster's dedication to serving the public. De Niro's Turk is a no-nonsense, short-tempered detective.



Carla Gugino in "Righteous Kill".

Photo credit: Righteous Productions, Inc.

Pacino plays the always calm and wise-cracking partner, Rooster, which makes them the classic buddy-cop dream team. Pacino – who does find his way into comedy as much as De Niro has – does deliver some funny lines. Of all the cop dramas about serial killers, "Righteous Kill" is the funniest.

To get lost in what passes as action when you have two men in their late 60s in the lead, though, you really have to turn on your suspension of disbelief.

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You can't ask yourself questions like "How are two people this old still on active duty?" or "Would the police really have that much trouble putting together suspects when the connection is so obvious?" or "Why did that woman from the first act show up at the softball field an hour into the movie just to ask a question about Turk's daughter who was never mentioned until now?"

The plot of this film – with its superfluous characters and unsuccessful twists – feels like a bad episode of "Law & Order".

If Coppola is right and Pacino and De Niro are just phoning it in, then that means Pacino and De Niro not even trying are still pretty great actors. If it was any other two wrinkly old men trying to sell this story, "Righteous Kill" might actually be a front runner for the [Razzies](#) [20].

Pacino and De Niro seem to make this schlock palatable, but for everyone thinking this is going to be the next "Heat," you're going to be left burnt.

"Righteous Kill," which stars Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, John Leguizamo, Donnie Wahlberg, Brian Dennehy, Trilby Glover, Carla Gugino and 50 Cent, opened everywhere on Sept. 12, 2008.



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