

Last vegas movie critique movie review examples

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Introduction

The film *Last Vegas*, directed by Jon Turteltaub, was released in 2013. It stars cinematic heavyweights like Michael Douglas, Robert De Niro, Morgan Freeman, and Kevin Kline. Some of these actors, like Kline and Douglas, have faded into general obscurity in recent years, but still have managed to maintain relative clout with their reputations, making this film seem like it was going to be one to remember. Unfortunately, most will probably remember it as one they wish they could forget. The storyline is boring, the jokes are stale, and the material is dull. There are a few redeeming qualities about the film, but they do not amount to enough to make the film worth seeing.

Synopsis

The four friends featured in the film have known each other since childhood. Now 60+, painfully old, and looking as if they should be standing in a pill line at a retirement home, they reunite in Las Vegas for one final attempt at being youthful, perhaps before they actually retire to a retirement home. That is, unless the audience remembers that Kline's character already has begun living in a retirement home; how predictable. The characters are from Brooklyn and, in their younger days, were known as the "Flatbrush Four," suggesting that they had earned themselves a reputation as a troublemaking group of young men. Three of the characters seem happy to relax into a life of bliss until they die, until Billy, Douglas' character, rounds them up for one last go at their youth. Billy decides to marry his comically younger girlfriend and is determined for the band of brothers to have a final brush with

excitement before he gets married. The plan is for his friends to attend, of course. Just based on the plot, the 105-minute running time will seem a little long for most audiences .

Critique: What were they thinking?

Throughout the movie, I found myself wondering how this movie idea was brought to producers. When writers were looking for producers, the conversation must have outlined what *The Hangover* would look like if it had taken place after the actors had grown old. While the idea of getting four geriatric friends together in Las Vegas seems funny, there is no other explanation for why this idea came about. More to the point, this idea has been done. It has not been done exactly in this way, because the actors were younger, but the idea has been played out several times before. The storylines have involved men, young and old, coming together for one last celebration, in and out of Las Vegas. Granted each of the actors in *Last Vegas* is far more qualified for the job than many actors in similar films, having garnered Oscar nominations and wins, and several critically acclaimed movies on their resumes, but the fact remains. This is perhaps what is most disappointing about the movie: each actor is superstar, in his own way. The audience expects the movie to be epic because of this; nobody expects to see the talents of De Niro and Freeman wasted but, unfortunately, it is in this film. Everything falls short, from beginning to end. Whether this is because the movie is simply bad, or because the actor's reputations are simply bigger than the film itself, it is hard to tell. The fact that the film is so generic supports the idea that it is simply bad writing. It is evident that the actors probably had more fun palling around on the set than

the audience did viewing the film.

Overall, the film seems like a waste of talent. These four actors are icons, each of whom having done inspiring and incredible films throughout their career. Yet here they are in what appears to be an almost generic comedy that, for the sake of the audience, throws in the occasional bit of sarcasm or rude humor. That being said, the first part of the film is admittedly not that painful. Douglas' character, Billy, is a womanizer who never seemed to let go of his youth. He has continued chasing young women well into old age until finally meeting the right young woman. De Niro's character, Paddy, plays a humble man with a chip on his shoulder about Billy skipping his late wife's funeral years before. He hardly leaves his apartment since her death. The audience hopes this tension is a set up for an emotional scene later. This type of scene would be something substantial for these two actors to give us and something for the audience to think about. The audience should not get their hopes up because they will only be disappointed. Despite this inevitable letdown, because of the grudge Paddy holds, the two do engage in some relatively humorous one-upping and niggling as they attempt to pick up a Vegas lounge singer who proves to be instrumental to the rest of the movie, and the men's friendships.

Kevin Kline's character, Sam, plays a man who may have been separated from the group for too long. He has been domesticated by his wife. At first, he does not appear to like it, or even remember how to behave outside. Married life has softened the edges of his old life that he used to live with his three friends, and he stands on unsteady legs as he tries to regain his confidence. He has recently joined his wife in a retirement home and has

been doing his best to adjust to the new surroundings. The audience soon finds that all he wants to do is get away from domestic life, cut loose, and get wild with his friends as he once did. Evidently, his wife is perfectly okay with this because she has outfitted him with Viagra and a condom, an example of the lewd humor Turteltaub inserted into the film, telling him what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. This action is mildly funny to watch.

Morgan Freeman's character, Archie, can relate to Sam in some ways. He too has been domesticated, but by an over-protective son who attempts to control his every move. This is because Archie suffered a stroke, due to old age, and for a time, could barely walk or stand. After the stroke, Archie's son decided they live together and the audience is supposed to get the idea that the arrangement is hilariously annoying for Archie. Archie also wants nothing more than to get away and relive some of his old days. He lives a life of medical seriousness and rules administered by his child, but once in Vegas he appears to have the time of his life.

The lives of the characters are funny, but Turteltaub does not seem to see it that way. This becomes a habit throughout the film. The setup for the character's lives is also painfully obvious, making it almost unwatchable as each one of their lives is shown. One is about to marry a woman too young for him, one is a widower, one is having severe health problems, and the last is struggling with the issues of marriage in old age. It is as if the writers wanted to make the actors clichés. While these issues do influence the elderly community, with four separate stories to tell I do not believe that they had to go for the most obvious of scenarios.

The momentum wears off, as most excitement during vacations does, about

midway through, when the four are judging a swimsuit competition. In a situation that provides many opportunities for hilarity, Turteltaub took none of them. Again, this became habitual throughout the entire film. The judging of the swimsuits is wildly boring and unfunny, only exacerbated when LMFAO begin grinding on De Niro's face for what appeared to be no other reason other than it might, or might not, make somebody laugh at some point in time. LMFAO's appearance seems like a cry for help until 50 Cent is spotted, at which point the audience sees that the film is worse than they thought. The rest of the film is uninteresting at best, as Turteltaub makes it a point to turn on the cold water any time the film could get anywhere near funny, interesting, or vulgar beyond PG-13 humor. To make this uninteresting film complete, the director thought it would be a good idea to include not one, not two, but multiple musical montages. If there were any unforgivable acts perpetrated upon the audience, this is, by far, the worst.

Critique: The Humor

A film of this genre can go one of two ways, like any other: good or bad. This one happened to go bad and one of the primary reasons was because of the jokes. The one-liners and running bits about the actors' age runs rampant throughout the film. Twenty-five minutes in, members of the audience not experiencing anything that the actors are speaking of are ready to shout, "WE GET IT! THEY ARE OLD! MOVE ON!" Running jokes, or rather, jokes that use a walker include the actors frequently stopping their activities to take their medications. This is hilarious the first time, but not as funny the seventh time. After the seventh time the audience realizes that this is the everyday life of an elderly person and it is no longer funny, so much as sad.

Numerous references to Viagra are also made throughout the film. Again, these are funny at first, but after the first few times the audience gets sense of the reality behind the joke. There is, after all, truth in every joke and that holds up throughout Last Vegas. Then of course, there are the “ hilarious” scenes in which the men are rejected after having used pick-up lines from their youth that women of today no longer understand. These scenes are all contrived and completely expected. It is hard for the audience to find something as predictable as that to be funny, or even entertaining.

Critique: Saving Grace

Surprisingly, a few aspects saved the movie, or at least made it more bearable to watch. For example, Turteltaub made the film much more vulgar than the average moviegoer would have expected, given the age of the cast. This was also a surprise given Turteltaub’s previous film endeavors, which include The Kid, and National Treasure. Such family friendly film experiences would not have the audience expecting to have Michael Douglas discussing his younger girlfriend playfully performing sexual acts upon his person. Though the film maintains a PG-13 rating, Turteltaub somehow managed to make these four aged men coarse and hilarious without being too over the top . It was appreciated, but unfortunately one of the only aspects of the film that was unpredictable, and that was only part of the time. In many instances, even the lewd behavior of the characters becomes expected. This fact may have only been because the actors were older. However, it has been becoming a more accepted, and even expected aspect of humor in movies for older actors to use lewd or sexual humor.

Mary Steenburgen plays the aforementioned lounge singer that Kline and De

Niro attempt to pick up. She is another of the brighter lights in this otherwise dismal production. Her name is Diana, and she is perhaps the only character that attempts to inject substance into the film. From the moment she meets the men of the group she begins changing their lives subtly; essentially, she begins changing each man. Knowing her forces them to realize things about themselves and one another. Subsequently, she changes their friendship and manages to make it stronger. In the middle of Las Vegas, city of false promises, she somehow manages to come across as a sincere individual while doing this. There is not a lot of substance that she gives to the film, but after watching Morgan Freeman drunkenly dance in a club, hearing numerous bad puns, and watching these older actors have almost too much fun acting their age, it is welcomed, even for a comedy.

The actors also have a nice chemistry on screen. The jokes are awful, the humor is bad, but the chemistry is there. In many instances, the bad writing and predictability of the film are all but forgotten simply because the actors have an easy air around one another. While many of the jokes can be completed before the characters finish them, it is easy to believe that these individuals really were friends in their youth. It is also easy to believe that they formed a troublemaking friends and spent their youth stalking for women, getting drunk, and denying that they would ever get old. Their chemistry makes the jokes less painful than they otherwise would have been. To his credit, the director also managed to create an environment that allowed these men to hit on women 40 years younger than them without anybody vomiting. Many movies are unable to do this; the scenes are awkward, causing the audience to cringe. The scenes depicted in Last Vegas,

however, appear to show a group of men who are trying to relive their youth. They are not truly attempting to pick up these women, despite how rude and crude their comments may be. This fact makes the behavior easier to believe, and also makes the scenes, as well as the characters, much less upsetting than in other films.

Conclusion

In sum, I believe that in the beginning, this movie may have possessed a lot of potential. Much of it was most likely lost when the director evidently decided not to be too vulgar. I will never understand why he did this, when he enlisted actors who have been in movies where they were nothing but vulgar. Despite this unfortunate fact, there were a few good things about the film: it maintained some sense of humor and substance, thanks to a few well-timed jokes and a pretty lounge singer. The casting director also managed to form a team that connected very well together. There was a lot of squandered potential, both in talent and opportunities to joke. However, I will admit that Last Vegas is more than likely a riot for individuals of the age that the film was aimed at. Anybody over 50, or even 40, may find it very enjoyable. Many films that are released today are made for audiences that want action, 3D experiences, loud explosions, and surprises. It could be that this film was just not suited for every audience, just like those action films are not suited for every audience. In that respect, Last Vegas was a triumph for the demographic it was aimed toward. For the rest of us, it was terrible. For anybody not in this demographic, Turteltaub ended the film with a possibility, or perhaps it was a warning, of a sequel. It is possible that this may happen, but the director should consider that by the time a sequel is

approved, his four primary stars might be on their deathbed, as will the core fan base. However, if a sequel does somehow get approved before that time, hopeful this time Turteltaub will learn from his mistakes and utilize all of the amazing talent he has before him. In addition, as a personal favor to the audience, maybe he will keep the musical montages down to zero. The people in charge of this movie may have tried their hardest, and while analyzing the movie, I made it a point to admire their effort. Nevertheless, I still must insist that this movie is not worth seeing, unless you are part of the targeted demographic or simply enjoy this type of humor.

References

Turteltaub, J. (Director). (2013). Last Vegas [Motion Picture].