

All the Money in the World is buoyed by a late addition to the cast

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: ««« out of ««««

Running Time: 132 min.

If you've been following entertainment news, you might have heard about the strange situation that befell *All the Money in the World*, the latest feature film from director Ridley Scott (*Alien*, *Blade Runner*

,
Gladiator

,
Prometheus

,
The Martian

). Kevin Spacey was cut out of the film and replaced just a few weeks ago, with significant material re-shot and edited into the feature. While a critic never wants such reports to influence him, the story has all been so public that it's difficult not to acknowledge it to some degree.

This isn't a small change. The character is hugely important to events and seems to appear in almost a third of the movie. Strangely enough, the last minute alterations aren't overly noticeable in the final film. In fact, it's an impressive technical accomplishment, with the new material providing some of the strongest stuff in the entire feature. Overall, the biopic is a solid, if not exemplary examination of a famous figure and some unusual, true-life events.

It all centers around a kidnapping that took place in Rome in 1973. While wandering the streets,

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teenager John Paul Getty III (Charlie Plummer) was taken and held for ransom by kidnappers. Demanding \$17 million for his safe return, the boy's mother Gail Harris (Michelle Williams) approaches family patriarch, wealthy oil baron and ex-father-in-law, J. Paul Getty (Christopher Plummer). She asks him to provide the money for the exchange. Naturally, the cold and icy figure refuses to the deal and instead asks his security advisor, Fletcher Chase (Mark Wahlberg) to poke around and ask questions.

One can completely empathize with Harris and her struggles to secure assistance from the elder Getty. Frustrated by the assumptions of others that she lives in splendor (the figurehead had virtually ignored all of his offspring and relations) or that the boy has staged his own kidnapping, the situation worsens when mutilation is threatened on the boy. Still, these particular characters and their motivations offer little that is new and don't make as strong an impression. A late, dressing-down speech from Chase to Getty even comes off as a little false.

It's the J. Paul Getty scenes that really fascinate. Plummer takes joy in playing this horrid, devious and perhaps even sociopathic individual. Simply put, whether he's dealing with violent kidnappers or panicked family members, he will do anything to get the best out of the situation financially. This includes taking a tax deduction on ransom payments and causing pain and bloodshed simply to protect his fortune. He's a terrible person, but Plummer is dynamic in the role. There's also interesting interplay between the teen and one of his kidnappers (Romain Duris), who form an unexpectedly empathetic relationship after being stuck together for an extended period of time.

The movie also has pacing issues, taking some tension away from the kidnapping itself. It's lengthy and requires time to find its stride, especially with numerous flashbacks early on setting up the characters and their background. Once the kidnappers become angry at the lack of progress, events become more exciting, but there are some dry sections with Harris trying and failing to move forward during the crisis.

At least the entire cast is complemented by the lovely photography. The movie is beautifully lit with some of the colors washed out and carrying a brown hue. This helps to date the appearance, giving it a 70s feel. There are numerous brightly lit scenes, allowing snowflakes and speckles of dust to become visible in frame.

So, while *All the Money in the World* is a bit padded out and not quite as exciting as one would hope, it is well made and does make an impression. Through certainly fictionalized, the feature

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also provides keen insight into the family. Additionally, the movie effectively critiques J. Paul Getty, displaying how his immense wealth only spiraled him into becoming an even greedier, paranoid and more misanthropic individual. If nothing else, that is a valuable lesson to impart from this biopic.

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By Glenn Kay

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