

Ocean's 8 offers a new female cast, but with an old, worn heist formula

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

Running Time: 110 minutes

Just last year, the *Ocean's 11* series got a countrified redo from director Steven Soderbergh with *Logan Lucky*. Less than a year later, we've received another variation on the formula called *Ocean's 8*. This time out, the story is based around a heist perpetrated by an exclusively female crew. While that might have seemed like enough to justify yet another take on this story, like any sequel after sequel after sequel, it can't help but seem like a bit of a rehash.

Just paroled from prison, Debbie Ocean (Sandra Bullock) is the sister of Danny Ocean from the previous installments. While in the joint, she's done nothing but plot her next big score... stealing a \$150 million dollar Cartier necklace. Debbie plots with friend Lou (Kate Blanchett), struggling fashion designer Rose Weil (Helena Bonham Carter), jewel expert Amita (Mindy Kaling), stolen goods fence Tammy (Sarah Paulson), computer hacker Nine Ball (Rhianna) and thief Constance (Awkwafina) to use the annual New York Metropolitan Art Gala to their advantage. They attempt to move Weil into the graces of celebrity Daphne Kluger (Anne Hathaway), influencing Cartier to lend her the necklace all so that they can steal it during the event.

And that's pretty much the gist of it. Admittedly, there are some funny gags here and there as Ocean pulls a series of minor cons to get herself some goods and a nice place to stay. There are also a couple of amusingly catty comments hiding plenty of insecurity from celebrity Kluger.

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One or two of the gags that involve manipulating targets into order to pull off the details of the operation also earn a smile. And a late appearance from an insurance investigator (James Corden) results in a funny interview with a suspect.

Still, the entire enterprise ends up a little, well, routine and flat. After some thought, this reviewer came to the conclusion that one of the story's biggest weaknesses (besides its familiarity) is the lack of a foil for these characters. Simply put, there really isn't any kind of threat present to get in the way of these characters doing their job. Any of the characters could call off the operation at any point and walk away without repercussions. No one is even actively after them. In fact, no one outside of the group is even aware that a heist is occurring. It makes for a tension free and lackluster opening 80 minutes.

The dialogue between the characters isn't particularly biting either. At times it appears as if the film is trying to emulate the style of the previous chapters in the series. Yet as a result, the end product feels stiff and forced. These are extremely talented performers, but they seem to be holding back onscreen and the movie is muted and less amusing than intended. After the robbery, events do perk up as the investigator steps in to try to recover the jewels. At this point, there actually is some tension and interest. Unfortunately, it's a brief portion of the movie and events resolve themselves quickly and simply.

Ocean's 8 suffers from a script that doesn't provide enough obstacles for its protagonists to overcome and never builds a great deal of momentum or excitement. It doesn't even give its characters much in the way of personal motivation for the crime, besides the obvious payday. So, while this may be the heist of a lifetime, in the end it never seems anything less than routine.

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