

## 'The Hunt' isn't worth pursuing

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun  
Friday, 20 March 2020 06:13

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Rating: «

out of «««««

Running Time:  
89 minutes

The disturbing concept of humans being hunted for sport has been used in various stories and movies over the past century. It appears as though the first story to arrive was *The Most Dangerous Game*

by Richard Connell in 1924. Since that time, there has been a film adaptation, as well as other features using a similar premise to good effect.

*Hard Target*

(1993) was a stylish and fun action flick, and the Japanese title

*Battle Royale*

(2000), added a bit of deeper meaning and subtext to the scenario. The latest tale to follow suit is

*The Hunt*

. It was originally slated to be released back in September, but a mass shooting incident led to a delay. Unfortunately, any extra time the filmmakers might have had to work on the picture hasn't helped. It's an ineffectual satire that never finds the proper tone.

The movie begins with a series of text messages between a group of well-off and elite members of society discussing their intentions of killing those whom they deem undesirable. It then introduces a group of confused strangers who awaken in a clearing. Early on, they come under attack by unseen forces and separate into a few factions; some of the more memorable individuals include Gary (Ethan Suplee), Staten Island (Ike Barinholtz), and Crystal (Betty

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Gilpin). There is talk among them about rumors of a “Manor House” and a woman named Athena (Hilary Swank), who runs a business to assist the rich in hunting down the poor. The unfortunate targets attempt to escape from their pursuers, figure out exactly where they are, and fight back.

The movie appears to want to satirize all political persuasions as the haves and have-nots square off, but the characters themselves aren’t memorable. It jumps from person to person from the beginning and there isn’t much information given about anyone. This tactic makes it difficult for the actual lead to make an initial impression. As time passes, one individual begins to stand out, but then the feature takes another turn and decides to focus on the hunters and their backstory. This is all put together in a jumbled fashion that never gels. It’s enough to make one think that there has been some serious tinkering and re-editing going on.

And when the film attempts to address real issues that such a scenario brings up, it does so in an exceptionally poor manner. There are insults thrown around by the leads about the villainous intellectual elites, as well as barbs directed by the hunters at their prey. Most of the comments fall flat, and many of them don’t make sense to boot. References are also made to current events and issues like immigration, but none are sharply written. The script can never seem to clarify what it’s trying to get at, and even contradicts itself over the course of the running time. It doesn’t really want to deal with any of the issues raised and instead only pokes and prods viewers to provoke a shock response.

It’s also strange to see such serious subject matter interspersed between gags involving some less-than-brilliant characters being blown up or impaled on sharp objects in incredibly graphic ways. Instead of being a biting satire, the movie ends up being a tonal mess. It never seems to know when it should poke fun at itself or when to properly address the concerns it raises, choosing the wrong approach at the wrong time more often than not.

So, is there anything positive to say at all? While it’s not a good thing for the characters featured, at least the movie moves by very briskly, as the protagonist travels from one violent scenario to the next, with barely a moment of real comprehension or examination. The screenplay tries to throw in a few twists, although you won’t care about the characters enough for these devices to make an impression. And the final showdown between the lead and villain features some decent fight choreography as the two grapple and bash each other up in the antagonist’s manor.

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However, those are about the only complimentary comments this reviewer can throw in the movie’s direction. Those who find the premise interesting would be better served by the previous features mentioned at the beginning of the review, as ultimately, *The Hunt* isn’t worth pursuing.

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