

'Made in Italy' presents idyllic views, but little else that inspires

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 21 August 2020 03:31



Rating: «« out of «««««

Running Time:
94 minutes

Sometimes, movies can whisk viewers far away to gorgeous and inviting places halfway around the world. The new comedy/drama *Made in Italy* does just that, dropping its leads in Tuscany to soak up the incredibly picturesque locale. Frankly, this movie could inspire anyone to leave everything behind and move out there permanently. It's unfortunate that the story itself isn't nearly as engaging or remarkable as the idyllic views on display.

Jack (Micheál Richardson) is a London art dealer in the middle of a separation from his icy wife, Kate (Lindsay Duncan). When she announces she's selling their gallery, Jack is destroyed and begs for an opportunity to purchase the building from her. Remembering that he and his estranged artist father Robert (Liam Neeson) have a Tuscan home that they haven't visited in 20 years since his mother passed away, he calls his dad up. Jack plots to get them to the property in order to fix it and make a quick sale, so that he can use his half of the earnings to take control of the gallery.

However, they find the neglected home in disrepair and in need of a great deal of work. The longer they stay on site, the more Robert wants to stay. In the process, Jack befriends village

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restaurateur Natalia (Valeria Bilello).

This is a very low-key, sweet and overly cutesy movie. Early sections deal with father and son being told by their real estate agent that the Tuscan home is unsellable (it is messy, but the sentiment is completely ridiculous). As they're fixing it up, they don't face great difficulties, other than an angry weasel that is squatting on the property. And of course, the very first local Jack encounters is a lovely and very available restaurant-owner who makes incredible dishes.

It's such a wonderful place that moments after their arrival, most viewers will wonder why the pair would even consider returning home.

Believe it or not, we the audience, *are* supposed to believe that Jack has a tough decision on his hands about what to do with his life if he doesn't manage to make the sale in 30 days and take control of the gallery. Yet every time an outsider shows up at the home to make an offer on it, the purchasers are presented as either bizarre or completely obnoxious people. Most of the comedic elements on display in the film are too obvious or on-the-nose in their execution.

The only real conflict is some personal drama between Jack and Robert. Neeson does manage to add some gravitas out of losing his wife and being unable to create new art pieces since her death. And while most of the jokes fall flat, he does eke out a couple of chuckles when complaining about the loss of true romance and chance in the world (criticizing his son's generation for relying on dating apps to find a mate). When he and co-star Richardson do finally address their pain at the close of the picture, it does add a pinch of drama to the proceedings.

However, there's only so much the two stars can do when the plotting is so routine and predictable that it doesn't allow for any surprises comedically or any deeper analysis dramatically.

Instead, viewers will be introduced to these characters and their issues, have an immediate conclusion of what will follow and exactly how these people will find happiness. They will then be forced to wait 80 minutes while the leads figure out for themselves what was obvious from the beginning. I suppose one could argue that at least all this silliness is playing out in a gorgeously scenic area. Still, while one might enjoy the sights and beauty of *Made in Italy*, the story doesn't make any imprint or offer much in the way of inspiration.

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