

'The Accountant' doesn't add up

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
Friday, 14 October 2016 05:03



Rating: «« out of 4 stars

Running Time: 128 min.

I wonder who exactly thought that it would be a grand idea to title an action/thriller *The Accountant* ?

Heck, even something as unexceptional as *The Reckoning*

would be slightly snappier (and is a bookkeeping term, to boot).

The chosen title doesn't exactly get the blood pumping, even when the film in question is undoubtedly intended to excite viewers. Yet in a strange way, I suppose the moniker is appropriate. As hard as the talented cast and crew try to add a few twists and create something unique, the end result can't help but feel a bit stiff and generic.

Christian Wolff (Ben Affleck) is a brilliant freelance accountant who can cook the books for wealthy corporations or find missing funds, all in a matter of hours. However, his high-functioning autism also results in considerable difficulties with social interactions.

When he's hired by the upper management of a robotics firm to find a money leak, Wolff dives into the books and even manages to make a friend (Anna Kendrick) in the accounting

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department. However, his findings make the pair targets for an assassin (Jon Bernthal).

Surprisingly, Wolff is just as adept as a killer as he is an accountant, leading to a lot of bloodshed.

It seems fairly straightforward, but there’s a lot more going on aside from the business scheme and a budding friendship. The movie seems determined to explain how Wolff developed his accounting and killing skills, revealing pieces of information through multiple flashbacks.

Also on Wolff’s trail is a pair of Treasury Department agents (J.K. Simmons and Cynthia Addai-Robinson). Several of these characters have lengthy histories that are slowly laid out, with the emphasis on *slowly*...

The first act is quite dry and awkward, introducing numerous characters and taking its time to develop the various parties involved. Creating well-drawn personalities is all well and good, but it also means there’s little in the way of threat or tension in the first third of the film.

And when the action starts, it’s a strange tonal shift. In fact, it also seems as if the screenplay is attempting to wedge in various genres all at once. The story frequently shifts from a character study, to a family drama, to a gritty, tough-guy vigilante picture. It even wants to hint at the possibility of romance and introduces elements that wouldn’t be out of place in a superhero movie.

There’s just too much going on here.

While some aspects are interesting, the pacing gets bogged down in the numerous flashbacks, several of which feel overly extended, repetitive, and at times not even essential to the central story.

The movie isn’t helped by a dull and dark color palette that doesn’t offer any sort of visual

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punch.

Director Gavin O’Connor (*Warrior*) handles the handful of physical action scenes well. He also has an affinity for family drama and hard-boiled characters. However, as written, relationships don’t come off in nearly as convincing a manner. The screenplay also wastes its villain, who isn’t given much to do besides snarl and panic in the final act.

I can appreciate what some elements of the film are trying to address and that the performers are elevating the material to a degree. This picture could have been a complete disaster with others in front of and behind the camera. But there’s really no saving a clunky, awkwardly constructed screenplay that lets down all of the talent involved. In the end, *The Accountant* should have been scrutinized and adjusted significantly before the cameras started rolling.

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For the Sun***