

Adaptation brings tear to *The Eye*

This unfortunate remake features Jessica Alba and little else

filmreview

The Eye

Now Playing

Directed by David Moreau and Xavier Palud

Starring Jessica Alba, Alessandro Nivola, and Rade Serbedzija

EDMON ROTEA

Arts & Entertainment Staff

While zombie and slasher-torture films continue to dominate the box office, Hollywood has also attempted to replicate the success of another breed of horror film: Asian remakes. American versions of Asian horror films continue to proliferate with releases such as *The Ring*, *The Grudge*, *The Return*, and now *The Eye*—a remake of the Hong Kong horror film *Jian Gui*.

The movie stars Jessica Alba as Sydney Wells, a young and blind symphony violinist recovering from a successful cornea transplant. However, the transplant has side effects: Sydney experiences

unusual visual phenomena that includes visions of the recently and the soon-to-be deceased—a plot that was originally inspired by a real patient who committed suicide shortly after undergoing a cornea transplant.

Such visions are so disturbing that they drive Sydney to seclusion away from the world of sight, eventually enlisting the help of ocular therapist Dr Paul Faulkner (Alessandro Nivola) in seeking the truth

behind the unfortunate fate of her cornea donor. However, *The Eye* is another Asian horror film that continues to suffer from an endemic problem in Hollywood—the “Houdini” effect—with the Americanized version attempting to become bigger and better than its original foreign-language predecessor in a blatant attempt to appeal to Western audiences. Despite its grander budget, more elaborate special effects, and eye-candy like Alba, the film is

unfortunately shortsighted in its execution, as seen in its overt exposition, shallow character development, and the explosive yet incredibly unrealistic and absurd Hollywood-style climax.

First, *The Eye* features too much exposition, with many elements of the film’s plot and characters being revealed too quickly and with too much repetition. Sydney keeps experiencing a fiery vision—a premonition. Whereas the visual and narrative exposition of *Jian Gui* gradually alludes to the events that explained such a vision, *The Eye* assumes that North American viewers lack an attention span or a good short-term memory, continually reminding audiences of that same fiery vision over and over again throughout the film.

The Eye also lacks the character development seen in the original. Whereas *Jian Gui* goes into greater background detail and delves into the rationale behind the deaths of the individuals whom Sydney encounters as ghostly apparitions, such ghosts in *The Eye* are merely flat, two-dimensional characters with little background information other than how—but not why—they died.

Themes of familial bonding and connection are also severed in *The Eye*. While many scenes

in *Jian Gui* concern the death of family members, such scenes also serve to advance the plot and reveal important character information, especially about the ghostly spirits. But such a theme is scrapped in *The Eye*, with the original’s scenes being replaced instead with montages of cheap, in-your-face instant scares and senseless action sequences.

The Eye aims to deviate from the usual trend of zombie, slasher, or monster films. However,

the American remake falls prey to the usual themes and narratives of typical Hollywood film, transforming another unique and creative Asian horror film into another average American horror movie intent on generating ticket sales. Even though the film features Alba, horror movie fans should gaze away and avoid watching the *The Eye*—and instead keep an eye out for the original Asian version at their local video store.

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Mad Money a cheap script

filmreview

Mad Money

Now Playing

Directed by Callie Khouri

Starring Diane Keaton, Queen Latifah, and Katie Holmes

VANESSA HORNE

Arts & Entertainment Writer

Comedian Dane Cook has argued that every man wants to be part of a heist; however, *Mad Money* shows that stealing millions of dollars can be a woman’s job too. Directed by Callie Khouri (who wrote and directed *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*) and starring Diane Keaton, Queen Latifah, and Katie Holmes, *Mad Money* banks on those actresses’ pre-established fanbases to bring in an audience. But despite their resumés, this girl-power heist film doesn’t show anything you haven’t already seen in *Ocean’s 11* through *13*.

The movie starts with some non-linear confession scenes but moves into a breakdown of why these three decided to rob the Federal Reserve in Kansas City. Bridget Cardigan (Keaton) is an upper-middle-class housewife who, with no work experience and a 12-year-old degree in comparative literature, is determined to make some money to pay off her family’s debt after her husband is laid off. She takes the only job opportunity available—janitorial work at the Federal Reserve—and there she’s in constant awe of the amount of money that

passes through and how much gets destroyed. Bridget develops a plan to steal worn-out money, then ropes Nina (Latifah) and Jackie (Holmes) into her heist plans. Between the three of them, they make several unnoticed withdrawals from the Federal Reserve. However, their desire to spend the money eventually gets them into trouble.

Unfortunately, the script depends on using stereotypes to carry each character. Of course, Latifah plays the single black mother who wants the best for her kids. Of course, it’s upper-middle-class Bridget who can’t resist buying a shiny new ring just to impress her neighbours. The use of these stock characters gets a few laughs—Queen Latifah offers to pay for her sons’ education in crack—but generally leads to predictable line delivery and story progression. Throw in a confusing ending, and you aren’t left with much.

Furthermore, it’s hard to tell if the film intends to be satirical or sincere. Bridget is particularly difficult to like or feel sorry for, with her motivation for stealing millions of dollars hardly being altruistic. Only after she can have the big diamond ring she’s always wanted is she able to move onto more important things, like her relationship with her husband and her friendship with Nina and Jackie. Although she does come through for everyone in the end, Diane Keaton will never be another Annie Hall or Kay Corleone.

Mad Money is a fun movie, and if you want more of the heist genre, or if you wanted to know how a woman would steal millions without wearing a cat suit, then it’s probably a must-see. But besides a few laughs, this movie is another case of a cast that’s all dressed up with nowhere to go.

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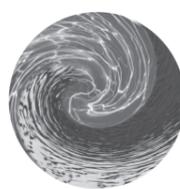
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