

Let It Ride ★★★

Year of Release: 1989

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: See It

To be perfectly honest, the ads for *Let It Ride* had me prepared for a mindless, throw-away comedy. And while *Let It Ride* is light-weight fluff, that doesn't stop the movie from charming your pants off with its whimsical humor.

Let It Ride plunges us into the world of compulsive race track junkies. The movie definitely knows the ins and outs of horse race gambling: the customs, the slang, the rituals, and most important, the wide assortment of weirdoes who virtually live at the track.

Every character in *Let It Ride* is deliciously quirky and offbeat—representing a juicy slice of humanity. Richard Dreyfuss plays Jay Trotter, a down-and-out cabby whose marriage is in shambles. The movie depicts one day in his life—a very, very lucky day, in which he starts to win and win and win until he has accumulated \$69,000. The big question is whether he'll bet it all away or quit while he's ahead. Trotter is a pathetic loser, but Dreyfuss' sarcastic wit makes the character lovable. Dreyfuss can add one more notch to his belt for yet another crack performance.

Let It Ride is also notable for its wonderful supporting cast of character actors. David Johansen

plays Trotter's best friend Loonie, a simple-minded dunce who gets his kicks from tape recording people in his cab. Jennifer Tilly brings an air of sweetness to her role as the dizzy bombshell whose eye-popping figure could stop a train. And Robbie Coltrane is in fine form as the easily-exasperated bet collector. Even the smallest, most insignificant roles are refreshingly eccentric.

Teri Garr plays the one character who doesn't click. Her role as Trotter's neurotic wife isn't sympathetic; it's just pathetic. She is so irritating that you can't understand why Trotter wants to save their troubled marriage.

In general, however, the components of *Let It Ride* complement one another and keep the movie purring like a well-tuned motor. The dialogue is snappy and full of crackling zingers from out of left field. *Let It Ride* revels in the absurd. First-time director Joe Pytko has strong instincts for comedy. Many of the laughs arise directly from his camera work. I haven't seen such hilarious zooms or angles since *Raising Arizona*.

Let It Ride has no ambitions or pretensions of being anything other than a comic fairy-tale. And on that level, the movie is a winning ticket.