

Pacific Heights ★★

Year of Release: 1990

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: Skip It

With *Pacific Heights*, screenwriter Daniel Pyne has shot himself in the foot by destroying a promising premise with two frustratingly idiotic characters. Melanie Griffith and Matthew Modine play a cute (but fatally dumb) couple who buy a decrepit Victorian house in Pacific Heights and sink all of their savings into restoring it. However, the only way they can afford their dream house, which is located in San Francisco's ritziest neighborhood, is to rent out the rooms on the ground floor. A devious con man (Michael Keaton) maneuvers his way into one of the apartments and sets into motion a fiendish plot to ruin their lives, their home, and their credit rating.

Pacific Heights blows its chance to be a stirring and compelling psychological thriller. Keaton,

playing a frighteningly sinister sociopath, holds up his end of the deal with a penetrating performance. Guilty of excessively self-conscious direction, director John Schlesinger lets the movie slip away from him. He doesn't receive any help from Pyne's hopelessly inept screenplay. Griffith and *especially* Modine are so excruciatingly stupid that you quickly lose all sympathy for them, even though their predicament is tragic. It gets to the point where you even root against them. The young couple makes one mistake after another and blindly walks into traps that you can see from miles away. If the protagonists showed even a shred of intelligence, Keaton's scheme would collapse like a house of straw in a tornado. *Pacific Heights* is a resounding disappointment.

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