

Quick Change ★★½

Year of Release: 1990

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: See It

Actors and directors will often tell you that it's a lot harder to make a successful comedy than it is to make an effective drama—that it's easier to draw a tear than to earn a laugh. But I'm beginning to wonder whether this is really true. In movies which try to combine drama and comedy, usually it's the comedy which carries the film and the drama which drags it down. The latest offender is Bill Murray's new film *Quick Change*, an engaging, fast-moving comedy which comes to a grinding halt whenever it attempts to stir up some dramatic substance.

Often, movies like this have snappy characters stuck in a dumb plot. *Quick Change* has the opposite problem: its clever plot is riddled with lousy characters. The movie is set in New York and involves an elaborate bank robbery, masterminded by Bill Murray with the help of Geena Davis and Randy Quaid. The gimmick: all the crooks have to do is get to the airport and they're home free, but the entire city seems to be conspiring against them. Their obstacles include a foreign cab driver, a slow shopping line, an anal retentive bus driver, confusing road signs and homicidal mobsters—not to mention the cops who are hot on their trail. The movie offers a cynical and satirical depiction of New York City as a crumbling metropolis.

The film's biggest crime is that it squanders Davis' comic talents. Davis is one of Hollywood's funniest comediennes, and she excels at playing goofy eccentrics, like the dog trainer in *The Acci-*

dental Tourist. But *Quick Change* short changes Davis by giving her a disappointingly pedestrian character.

Quaid gets the movie's biggest laughs as a world-class dunce, a large, burly guy who deep down is nothing more than a big, blubbing cry baby. The character is a kick in the pants, but the film never explains why Murray and Davis would put up with Quaid's sheer stupidity and costly blunders.

Fortunately, for Murray fans, *Quick Change* is an improvement over his last two pictures, *Scrooged* and *Ghostbusters 2*. Murray's role in *Quick Change* reminds me of Eddie Murphy's character in *Beverly Hills Cop*. Like *Cop*, *Quick Change* repeatedly puts its protagonist into touchy situations that require him to negotiate his way out of trouble. Murray's sardonic demeanor electrifies the comic scenes, but sadly, he isn't the least bit convincing during the serious moments.

The odd thing about *Quick Change* is that despite its inadequacies, it's surprisingly entertaining, thanks to the plot's imaginative twists and turns. The episodic story line is really just a series of vignettes which rely on Murphy's Law, or in this case Murray's law: everything that can go wrong will go wrong, as the crooks painfully learn on their way to the airport. Murray, who co-directed the film, smoothly orchestrates a symphony of mayhem and misfortune that's hard to resist.

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