

Film Close-Up: Diane Keaton

by Joey_Berlin

Diane Keaton stars in the caper comedy "Mad Money" as a suburban housewife who decides to rip off the super-secure Federal Reserve Bank. She has a low-level job at the facility and hatches a plan to steal millions with the help of two other staffers, played by Queen Latifah and Katie Holmes.

DIANE KEATON - Diane Keaton stars in 'Mad Money,' a comedy about three women who work for the Federal Reserve and plot to steal money that is about to be destroyed. CNS Photo courtesy of Melissa Moseley. Every day the women watch helplessly as bundles of worn-out bills are destroyed, so they decide to grab a few million for themselves. But the bungling thieves eventually make a crucial mistake.

Keaton's career has followed an unpredictable course. The 62-year-old has starred in some of the greatest films of all time, including "The Godfather" and "Annie Hall." For playing the title role in the latter film, Keaton won both the Best Actress Oscar and inspired a fashion trend.

Yet like everyone else in Hollywood, she has also appeared in her share of duds, such as the 2001 movie "Town & Country," one of filmdom's biggest box-office flops. In 2003, Keaton rebounded with her fourth Oscar-nominated performance, opposite Jack Nicholson in "Something's Gotta Give." The mother of two adopted kids, California-born Keaton admits to a lifelong aversion to wedlock.

Q: If you suddenly got a whole lot of money, would you save it or spend it?

A: I'd spend it! Are you kidding? There are so many things I have in my mind. I know what I would do. I'd buy up historic homes all over the United States and open them up to the public and restore them so that the public could be more aware of the treasures we have throughout the country. I would love nothing more than to do that for the rest of my life, if I could. If I could earn a living doing that, if I came into a lot of money, if I won the lottery, that's what I would do.

Q: It looks like you three women had a blast on the set. Did you crack up a lot during takes?

A: We did. You know, we were also working in Shreveport, so it was a different experience. It was sort of like we were actually in an atmosphere that matched what the story was about - three women, unlikely friends, thrust together and they were all victims of the system. I think that part of the movie speaks so much to what's going on right now.

Q: How do you mean?

A: I mean obviously this is a fun movie, it's not taking any of this really seriously, but at the same time it's talking about all those people who are involved in things like the subprime problems, losing their homes. Like Katie's character wants to see the world but doesn't have the opportunity. And Nina, who Queen Latifah's playing, is the kind of person who has to raise kids and has no money. We're playing forgotten, invisible women. And I feel like with that in mind, it's a very topical movie.

Q: Did you talk about those things with your co-stars?

A: We had a lot to talk about. And really, the intimate time is always in the makeup trailer.

Q: We are always taught that money cannot buy happiness, but with these characters it actually can, at least for a time.

A: It can buy security and opportunity. And in the case of my character, she gets a little bit carried away. She really loses herself behind the cash, which is also one of the temptations, of course.

Q: Did you try to make your character more sympathetic?

A: I think she's sympathetic, and I never thought about whether I was likable or not because, guess what? If that happened to me - you know, I'm a woman of a certain age and people just think you're supposed to roll over and give up with life. I think, "Hey, you know what? Forget that!" You can take hold of your life. You can still have adventure. You can still find friends in the most unlikely situations, and you can make something of your life. It's not over. Life is an adventure. For my character, it doesn't have to just be like, "Oh God, it's over. I got my liberal arts degree and nobody wants me and I can't help my husband." To me, all she ever aspired to was to be in the country-club set, and what was that? That was so lame she needed something to shake up her life.

Q: Did you enjoy working with your male co-star, Ted Danson?

A: Oh, yeah. It's a shame he's married. I really liked kissing him. I always like kissing men. It's my only opportunity in a movie role, so I really liked that scene and I was really happy when they stuck that scene in there.

Q: Last year you worked with Mandy Moore, and this year you are in a film with Katie Holmes, two young stars.

A: They're taking off. The future is theirs.

Q: Do you have a sense of how the pressures young actresses face these days compare with what you experienced as a young woman in Hollywood?

A: Of course the landscape of their life is completely different from when I was coming up in Hollywood, with "Annie Hall" or some of those early movies like "The Godfather." At that time the press was not that prevalent. It was a very different thing. It was fashionable at the time to stay away from it. "Less is more" was the attitude of the time. You only did certain things, very rarely. So I believe Katie and Mandy and even Dana (Queen Latifah) are thrust into a world where you really have to be more than just an actress. Particularly, of course, for Katie because it's kind of like being movie royalty. It's like Grace Kelly or something. Every time you go out there you're observed and scrutinized and you have to handle it, and you take on so much more than the fun and the adventure of being an actress. I think Katie's really fascinating because she takes it very seriously, from what I can see and observe.

Q: What is next for you? What have you been working on?

A: I did a book. You can buy it in the stores. It's called "California Romantica" and it's on Spanish homes in Southern California.

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