

Movie Review: 'Hot Fuzz'

by David_Elliott

Cuteness needs to stay cute. Turning blatant, it crams in cutes like "Hot Fuzz."

'HOT FUZZ' - Simon Pegg and Nick Frost play British officers in the comedy movie 'Hot Fuzz.' CNS Photo courtesy of Matt Nettheim. Of course, the title of this British comedy indicates that we will not get another "Kind Hearts and Coronets." And the Brits do have a tradition of broad comedy, as anyone can attest who knows of Benny Hill or the old "Carry On" films. The somewhat schizo "Hot Fuzz" is a double spoof: of the old Ealing comedies and Miss Marple funnies often set in cozy towns and manor houses, but also ramrod action movies and cop shows (mostly American) that tend to rule the English market.

That twin premise is fetching but, as always with humor, fun is in the follow-through. Director Edgar Wright, scripting with star Simon Pegg, winds it up and lets it fly. The result, even hitting its target, tends to splat.

Pegg plays Sgt. Nicholas Angel, compulsive deduction beaver of the London force. So obsessive that his girlfriend left him, he stays on the case even between cases. He wins all the commendations but alienates his team (including briefly seen boss Bill Nighy) by his tiresome perfection.

So he's fobbed off to Sandford, a perfect rural village and mighty proud of it: wee, tidy, crimeless but with a striking rash of lethal "accidents." Angel's antennae quiver to foul play. Everyone else is blase or simply retarded, although a murderer stalks in Grim Reaper robes and even the Anglican priest seems conspiratorial.

Pegg is such a fiercely correct rules enforcer that you might start yearning for Rowan Atkinson's hapless Mr. Bean to jiggle things loose. He's humorless, almost charmless, even when he gets juiced on pub ale with his new pal, the adoring cop Danny (Nick Frost), and they watch videos of "Point Break" and "Bad Boys II."

That's all the prompt we need for the coming stampede of overkill. But Wright has signaled that crescendo from the start. Slam editing, gags almost cartooned, music worthy of a dated Quinn Martin TV series - it's the alpha-male kit from start to finish, with a climax stretched like the most long-noodled of spaghetti Westerns.

Some chuckles expand well. The silly action delivers here and there, with Timothy Dalton as a smugly grinning country squire having more of a virility blast than he ever did as James Bond. Pegg's terrier moves offer some fine physicality.

But "Hot Fuzz," which careless video clerks will soon be putting on porn shelves, is spoofing elements that went down the camp trail a long time ago. And Pegg, a good actor, is rather a wet blanket - or a dry tea bag.

RATINGS 4 STARS - Excellent. 3 STARS - Worthy. 2 STARS - Mixed. 1 STAR - Poor. 0 - Forget It (a dog)

A Rogue Films release. Director: Edgar Wright. Writers: Edgar Wright, Simon Pegg. Cast: Simon Pegg, Bill Nighy, Timothy Dalton, Jim Broadbent, Martin Freeman, Billie Whitelaw. Running time: 1 hour, 47 minutes. Rated R. 2 stars.

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