

## The Wolf of Wall Street

Martin Scorsese is back in familiar “New Yawk” territory with his coruscating new look at the underside of the metropolis in “The Wolf of Wall Street.” The film is a rough paraphrase of Scorsese’s “Goodfellas” (1990) but instead of examining thuggery and the mob in Brooklyn he’s observing the hustle and grab of dirty money in Manhattan. Nobody gets rubbed out, but plenty are messed up.

There are other parallels. “Goodfellas” was based on a true story and a wise guy over voice narration from the lead actor, Ray Liotta. This time, we have another chronicle of a real figure, Jordan Belfort, played by Leonard DiCaprio, a different kind of wise guy, narrating the character’s pyrotechnic history and earned comeuppance.

Belfort is a Long Island 20-something who gets sucked into finance in the 1980’s, works hard but loses his job, then lands in penny stocks to earn a living. Yet he turns out to be a natural operator and even in this coarse game, he flimflams his way to success, with the help of his first recruit and eventual right hand man, Donnie Azoff (Jonah Hill).

After rounding up a bunch of rough-and-ready operators, he dazzlingly scouts out then misleads gullible investors and scams his way to founding his own lucrative, if finally criminal, enterprise called—pompously--Stratton-Oakmont Investments. During this wild ride in the markets of the 1990’s, he and his team make obscene amounts of money, spend it lavishly, and live high—on conspicuous consumption, rampant sex, and Quaaludes.

The film unrolls at a breakneck pace (over its three-hour duration) under Belfort’s wiseacre commentary. For the prudish or squeamish, be aware that that breakneck pace is awash with the rudest, baldest profanity, perpetual drug use, and a buttload (pardon the pun) of blatant nudity and offhand sexuality. This is a serious “R” rating, folks.

DiCaprio, by now a Scorsese staple (they’ve made five movies together) is well cast as the slick boy wonder, succeeding beyond his wildest dreams yet remaining oddly innocent about what’s happened to him. Hill is a bouncy cartoon of American business excess, a Wall Street porker. Making her major Hollywood debut as Belfort’s wife, Naomi, is Aussie actress Margot Robbie, a devastating beauty who also turns out to be a tough cookie (the equivalent, to again cite “Goodfellas,” of Lorraine Bracco in the earlier film). Adding a nice leavening to the proceedings is Kyle Chandler as the squeaky clean FBI man Denham who is finally able to run his man to ground.

“The Wolf” can be wildly entertaining, especially if you can see past the tawdry goings-on—or maybe just because of the tawdry goings-on! This observer wonders out loud, however, whether three hours of serious movie money is well spent chronicling the vagaries of one money-mad shark.

*(This film runs about three hours and is rated “R” for general grossness and very bad behavior)*

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