

Moving On

Actresses Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin forged identities as a successful sitcom team as co-stars of the Netflix series “Grace and Frankie,” which just finished a seven-year run on the Netflix streaming service, the longest-running series in the network’s history. They developed a ready rapport as mismatched friends who bond slowly over time to where they become testy besties, Fonda being an elegant entrepreneur left at sea after a painful divorce while Tomlin, a long-time art dabbler and smart aleck, exudes a more comic mode to confront her own surprise divorce.

In the wake of that series, the two 80-year-olds star in “Moving On” as estranged friends who reunite to seek revenge on the querulous widower Howard (Malcolm McDowell), husband of their recently deceased best friend

The film opens with Fonda--as Claire--returning to a California town where she grew up to attend the funeral for a best friend she’s known since college, not so much to honor her friend but rather to revenge herself on her friend’s husband Howard (Matthew McDowell). Evelyn—or Evie--(Tomlin) also shows up. Lesbian Evie, too, roomed with the departed but has never left the town and now resides in assisted living, and the two ex-roomies re-connect at the reception. Claire is wary and upset when she sees Howard—who greets her rudely and gruffly—but she blurts out: “I’m going to kill you.” Evie adds to the sour mood by addressing the assembled in a harsh put-down of Howard, after which the two women are asked to leave.

While in town, Claire runs across Ralph (Richard Roundtree), her second husband whom she divorced suddenly, and they rekindle some of their old affection over dinner with his new family. She has never explained her sudden exit from their marriage, but we learn (in a reveal to Evie) that it has to do with a nasty encounter with Howard buried in her past, the reason for her murder plans.

The best comic bit in this serio-comic picture is when the two women go cluelessly into a gun store to select an appropriate murder weapon. It results in some goofy back-and-forth in a world they know nothing of and ends when the store owner informs Claire, an out-of-stater, that she is not even allowed to purchase a weapon.

Fonda and Tomlin have an easy rapport, with the former a study in up-and-down anxiety and the latter a paragon of “moving on” from the muddled past—who also has a secret regarding their departed friend. Much of the spirt of their relationship will be familiar from those who know their Netflix series, but in “Moving On” Fonda is less quippy and Tomlin is more hippy.

Roundtree, now 80 and fifty years after his breakthrough as “Shaft,” still exudes smooth sexiness as Ralph, fit and cool and bald. In a film of smart performances, the odd man out is McDowell, way too cantankerous and acerbic to be taken seriously (but perhaps worthy of murder?). He plays a character

rather like his egotistic orchestra conductor in the Amazon series “Mozart in the Jungle” (also directed and produced by Paul Weitz), a conniver and sleaze.

While no masterpiece, “Moving On” offers us at least another tart Tomlin in a crafty Weitz comedy like their decent earlier joint effort “Grandma” (2015).
(The film, rated “R,” runs 85 minutes and is now showing in local area theaters.)

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