

Laughs Galore as Lotto-Winner Tries to Keep Low Profile in the 'Hood

Written by Film Review by Kam Williams



Lottery Ticket

Kevin Carson (Bow Wow) wasn't even thinking about buying a lottery ticket that fateful Friday the jackpot had reached \$370 million, even though folks on the long line were already talking about how they planned to spend the money on everything from a Versace suit to a mail order bride. After all, he considered Lotto a diabolical scheme designed "to keep poor people poor by selling them false dreams."

But then a couple of events transpire which you might call divine intervention. First, his grandmother (Loretta Devine) asks him to play the numbers that had come to her when Jesus appeared to her in a dream. Then, he's fired on the spot when recently-paroled Lorenzo (Gbenga Akinagbe) raises a ruckus at Foot Locker under the mistaken belief that Kevin was the snitch who put him behind bars.

Unexpectedly unemployed, Kevin impulsively decides to buy himself a lottery ticket, too, when he stops at the local bodega to get his grandma's. And that evening he gets the shock of his life while watching the drawing on TV when all of his numbers pop up one after the other.

Now, had Kevin hailed from suburbia, he might have been able to enjoy a fairytale ending and waltz off into the sunset right then and there. But being from the 'hood, there was still the little matter of surviving in the projects without attracting any attention before his first chance to redeem his lucky ticket. Regrettably, that opportunity wouldn't present itself until the lottery redemption center opened following the long July 4th weekend.

Hiding his good fortune proves to be easier said than done because Grandma Carson almost immediately breaks her promise not to share their secret with anyone. Consequently, word

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spreads on the block like wildfire and Kevin soon finds himself fighting temptation while trying to run a gauntlet of avaricious connivers wherever he goes. The chase which ensues unfolds like an inner city variation of the treasure hunt classic *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (1963), which similarly featured an abundance of cartoonish characters immersed in a variety of comical subplots.

Can Kevin elude the clutches of Lorenzo and the other bullies eager to steal his winning ticket? Will he have the strength to resist the womanly wiles of the shameless seductress (Teairra Marri) who suddenly says she wants to have his baby? Will he have the sense to turn down the cash advance with strings attached offered by a flamboyant mobster (Keith David) driving a fancy car? Will he tithe a tenth of the take to the shady minister (Mike Epps) who covets the money to build a mega church and to marry the new wife he says "God wants me to have."

Fortunately, Kevin does have a few trusted confidants who help keep him grounded amidst all the insanity, including his grandmother; his childhood sweetheart, Stacie (Naturi Naughton); mysterious neighborhood elder Mr. Washington (Ice Cube); and especially Benny (Brandon T. Jackson), his best friend since fifth grade. So by the time redemption day rolls around, he might not only still have his ticket out of the slums but have learned a priceless lesson about what really matters most in life.

A ROFL roller coaster ride with a heartwarming message! What more can you ask for from a ghetto-fabulous, escapist fantasy?

Excellent (4 stars)

Rated PG-13 for sexuality, profanity, violence, underage drinking and a drug reference.

Running time: 95 Minutes

Studio: Warner Brothers

To see a trailer for *Lottery Ticket*, visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nglUZdCqoRY>